

NALAS President meets European Union Commissioner for Enlargement Marta Kos

The European Union Commissioner for Enlargement, Marta Kos, visited Bar today and met with Dušan Raičević, Mayor of Bar and NALAS President. Her visit underscores the local administration's effective governance and the city's rapid development, particularly at this crucial time for Montenegro as it navigates key milestones and challenges on its path toward European reforms.



Commissioner Kos and Mayor Raičević discussed the opportunities arising from Montenegro's EU accession. "As Montenegro's EU accession process accelerates, municipalities will play a crucial role, as over 70% of EU legislation is implemented at the local level," stated Commissioner Kos, emphasizing the importance of local governance in driving European reforms.

NALAS President Raičević highlighted that Bar exemplifies efficient governance, rapid development, and successful implementation of EU-funded projects. He also pointed to the city's strong network of partner cities, many of which are in the European Union, showcasing Bar's openness to collaboration and the exchange of best practices.

Mr. Raičević further emphasized the importance of collaboration among municipalities and their associations in the region and across Europe through NALAS. He described how NALAS fosters regional partnerships that contribute to reconciliation, stability, and the broader European integration of the region.

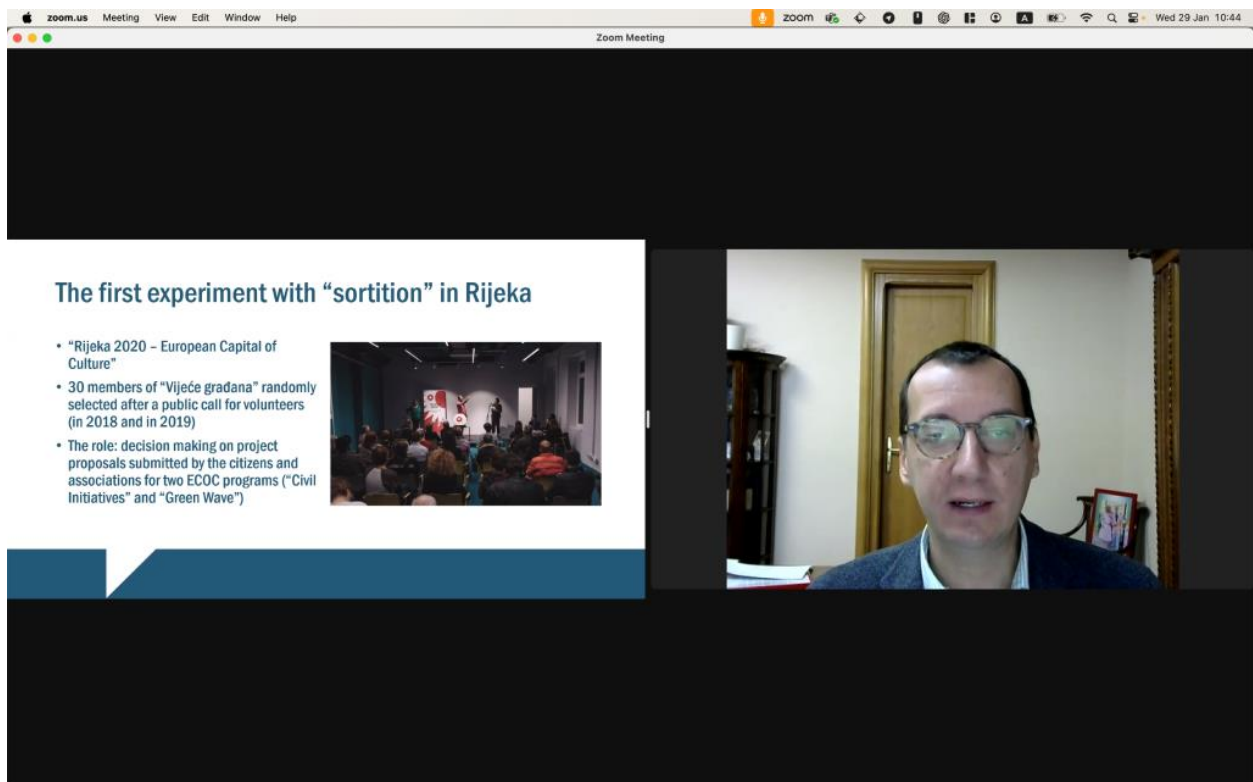
Community of Practice explores citizens' assemblies for more inclusive local governance

An insightful online peer exchange on citizens' assemblies in South-East Europe took place on 29 January 2025, as 18 local authorities and 7 NALAS member associations met for the second time as part of the Community of Practice on Deliberative Democracy.

During this meeting, more than 40 participants exchanged on the benefits of citizens' assemblies for enhanced citizen participation, through discussion with experts, academics and practitioners from the region and beyond.

According to Boran Ivanoski, NALAS Programme Director, *"Deliberative democracy provides a powerful framework for local governments to foster meaningful connections with citizens, ensuring that no one is left behind, which is also the central promise of the UN 2030 Agenda. Our Community of Practice serves as a unique platform to explore and enhance these processes"*.

As part of the exchange, Mr. Marko Filipović, Mayor of Rijeka and NALAS Vice President highlighted Rijeka Citizens' Assembly, a unique initiative organised in 2023 and offered valuable insights on the benefits of the process for local governments.



The screenshot shows a Zoom meeting interface. The top bar includes the Zoom logo, meeting controls, and the date 'Wed 29 Jan 10:44'. The main content area is split into two parts. On the left, a slide titled 'The first experiment with "sortition" in Rijeka' is displayed. The slide contains the following text:

- "Rijeka 2020 - European Capital of Culture"
- 30 members of "Vijeće građana" randomly selected after a public call for volunteers (in 2018 and in 2019)
- The role: decision making on project proposals submitted by the citizens and associations for two ECOC programs ("Civil Initiatives" and "Green Wave")

To the right of the text on the slide is a small photograph of a public assembly in progress. On the right side of the Zoom window, a video feed shows a man with glasses and a dark jacket speaking.

Background: Community of Practice on Deliberative Democracy was established under the project *"Promoting deliberative democracy and innovative approaches to citizen Participation in South-East Europe"*, led by the Council of Europe's Congress of Local and Regional Authorities in partnership with NALAS.

FRIENDSHIP events in Brussels 17-20Feb.

From February 17 to 20, a high-level Mongolian delegation will visit Brussels as part of the EU-supported FRIENDSHIP project.

Two key events will be organized in collaboration with NALAS:

1. **Networking Meeting at CEMR**

The first event will be a networking meeting at the CEMR premises in the House of Municipalities. It will bring together all project partners, including mayors from Croatia and Montenegro, NALAS experts, and representatives from CEMR/PLATFORMA. The primary objective is to strengthen the engagement of European and Mongolian local authorities through decentralized cooperation and to build alliances aligned with the EU's External Action on Integrated Urban Development.

2. **Best Practice Forum on City-to-City Cooperation**

The second event will focus on best practices in city-to-city cooperation between Europe and Mongolia. This forum aims to foster collaboration on urban development, resilience, and innovation by:

- Showcasing initiatives that address urban resilience challenges at the municipal and regional levels.
- Strengthening engagement with the Urban Transition Mission and the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy to advance the EU's global climate and energy objectives.
- Promoting systemic transition pathways toward net-zero, resilient, and human-centered cities through multi-level, multi-sectoral, and outcome-oriented partnerships.
- Defining next steps for cooperation within the framework of Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) between Mongolian municipalities and European cities such as Rijeka (Croatia), Bar (Montenegro), and Ajdovščina (Slovenia).

These initiatives will reinforce collaboration between European and Mongolian local authorities, driving sustainable urban development and strengthening international partnerships.

CIVEX: meeting with rapporteur Jean-Luc Vanraes

NALAS held an extensive consultation meeting with CoR Rapporteur Jean-Luc VANRAES and its colleagues about the 2024 EU Commission's Communication on EU enlargement policy COM(2024) 690 final.

The network shared its appreciation of the enlargement process and made several recommendations about the Growth Plan, Digital Transition, the recognition of the subsidiarity principle and the consideration of LGA's as dialogue partner in multilevel governance. The 1st

Draft will be ready by 15Feb. followed on 7th March by the vote of the CIVEX Commission, and finally the approval in the CoR plenary session on 2nd April. ¹

Transforming Elderly Care: NALAS Supports Delchevo Municipality with Digital Innovation



In today's era of digitalisation and rapid technological advancement, the possibilities for improving people's lives are virtually limitless. When designed with local needs in mind, developed through a participatory process, and underpinned by cutting-edge technologies, local public services can be transformed to better serve citizens. A prime example of this transformation is Delchevo Municipality in North Macedonia, where, with the support of NALAS

and the BACID program, the municipality has revolutionised its elderly care services.

Like many municipalities in the region, Delchevo has faced significant challenges in providing adequate social services. The shortage of healthcare providers, their concentration in the city centre and the lack of model medical equipment resulted in limited access for elderly patients

in rural areas to regular medical check-ups and adequate care.



The digital "**Elderly Care System**" now provides better care for elderly people, especially those in rural areas or with limited mobility, by remotely monitoring their vital health parameters. In just two months over 70 patients were provided with support through the system. It allows individuals to easily track key health metrics—such as blood pressure, heart rate, body temperature, and blood oxygen levels—using

intuitive, at-home devices. This data is securely transmitted in real-time via broadband to a

¹ COM(2024) 690 final, 30.10.2024 Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions – "2024 Communication on EU enlargement policy"



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

central monitoring station, where healthcare professionals can continuously assess the information, identify potential issues, and provide accurate diagnoses. If any abnormalities are detected, an alert is triggered, enabling swift intervention without the need for the individual to visit a clinic.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lkMSv6BjMnA&t=13s>

Background note: The Austrian Association of Cities and Towns (AACT) and KDZ – Centre for Public Administration Research implement the programme „Building Administrative Capacity in the Danube Region and the Western Balkans“ (BACID), supported by the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) with funds from the Austrian Development Cooperation. Project partners in the Region are the Regional School of Public Administration (ReSPA) of the Western Balkans and the Network of Associations of Local Authorities in South-East Europe (NALAS).