

MODULE C Regional Development and the local government and practitioners' perspective

Morning Session 11.00-12.30

Moderated talk with two Mayors and two Directors of Planning Region Centres in Macedonia

Moderator: HKA

The Panel discussion will focus on Local governments' and Regional Centres' perspective on Regional Development, namely

- What is their vision for regional development, and what objectives should Regional Development achieve?
- How do they steer Regional Development from their positions of Mayors and Directors of Centres for Regional Development?
- How can “good regional governance” in Regional Development be assured?

Participants:

- Ratko Dimitrovski is the Mayor of Kochani; Kochani Municipality has a little less than 40'000 inhabitants, and is famous for its rice production, also called the white gold;
- Dragica Zdraveva is the Director of the Centre of the East Planning Region (which includes the municipality of Kochani); her centre also fulfils the role of a secretariat to the Regional Development Council of the East Planning Region;
- Nikolche Churlinov is the Mayor of Valandovo; Valandovo Municipality has about 12'000 inhabitants, and is located close to the borders of Macedonia with Bulgaria and Greece; Valandovo is famous for its annual Folk Festival with performing Musicians and Dancers from the Western Balkans Region;
- Emilija Geroska is the director of the Pelagonija planning region in the South of Macedonia;

Question	Invited for response
<i>If you meet a citizen in the street in your municipality, and he or she asks you “What is regional development about?” how would you explain it to him or her?</i>	Ratko Dimitrovski, Mayor of Kochani
<i>What should be achieved with Regional Development? There is a whole menu of options in the literature: Reduction of disparities? Equity? Economic development? EU integration criteria fulfilment (chapter 22)? Capitalization of regional potentials in response to regional challenges? Can you prioritize these aspects from your perspective and relate to your specific region in the South-East of Macedonia?</i>	Nicolche Churlinov, Mayor of Valandovo (first) Emilija Geroska, Director of the Pelagonija planning region (second)
<i>What is the role, responsibilities and obligations of the members of the Regional Development councils?</i>	Ratko Dimitrovski, Mayor of Kochani (first) – from voting member perspective Dragica Zdraveva, Director of the Centre of the East Planning Region (second) – from secretariat perspective
<i>You are both voting members of the Regional Development council. How could you influence RD in your municipality and in your region? And what is your next plan?</i>	Both mayors

<p><i>A characteristic of good RD is integrated planning and management – so transport, subsidies, services, water and power, education are integrated for a common development objective. How do you tackle this integrated planning and management on regional level? What are the challenges and limitations?</i></p>	<p>Emilija Geroska, Director of the Pelagonija planning region (first)</p> <p>Ratko Dimitrovski, Mayor of Kochani (second)</p>
<p><i>A recent change in the law prescribes that also the civil society and the private sector shall be represented in the Regional Development Councils; How will this change the work of the councils, and how will these representatives be identified?</i></p>	<p>Dragica Zdraveva, Director of the Centre of the East Planning Region</p>
<p><i>It is said that “a common identity of stakeholders” helps to drive regional development. How would you describe common identity in your region? Does it help regional development, and could it be further fostered?</i></p>	<p>Emilija Geroska, Director of the Pelagonija Planning region</p>
<p><i>Inter-municipal cooperation is an important instrument for regional development sought for economies of scale in municipal service delivery. However, all over the Balkan we seem to observe limited (political) interest in IMC? Why is this? And how could it be incentivized?</i></p> <p><i>“In many cases, there are animosities between neighbouring municipalities, based on political, historical, cultural or ethnic grounds. However, there are evidences showing that the level of inter-municipal and regional cooperation is in a clear correlation with the number of geographically concentrated project interventions in a specific territory. This means that the level of inter-municipal cooperation is significantly higher in areas with stronger presence of donor projects. Inter municipal cooperation is also stronger in areas with active regional development agencies (from an analysis on regional development in the Western Balkans)”.</i></p>	<p>Nikolche Churlinov Mayor of Valandovo, member and former president of the Regional Development Council of South East Macedonia</p>
<p><i>Finally, let’s also talk about financing Regional Development and reduction of disparities. According to the law in Macedonia, 1% of GDP is reserved for RD; In comparison, municipalities in Macedonia receive funding from central government equivalent to ca. 6.5% of GDP (2012); Is 1% of GDP enough, too little or too much for RD to make a change in citizens’ life? How would you argue vis a vis your Minister of Finance, or a donor ready to top up domestic Regional Development funding?</i></p>	<p>Ratko Dimitrovski Mayor of Kochani (first)</p> <p>Emilija Geroska Director of the Pelagonija planning region in the South (second)</p>
<p><i>If RD is about reducing disparities, municipal funding as prescribed in the law should also include an equity dimension in the domestic funding of municipalities (additional and beyond EU pre accession and post accession funding). However this means not only that the poor get more, but also that the rich get less? Is there a readiness for this? Is a common understanding on the “costs” of large inequalities in a country developing? How and where do you observe this?</i></p>	<p>Nikolche Churlinov Mayor of Valandovo (first)</p> <p>Dragica Zdraveva, Director of the Centre of the East Planning Region (second)</p>