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## Editor's notes

Welcome to the ninth issue of the **dlgnews**.

This issue includes information about the Train4Dev/DeLog training course on **"Harmonisation, Decentralisation and Local Governance"** that took place this year in Thun, Switzerland and shares details of the future training in-country training that will be held in Benin.

With a view of preparing the network for the **third F2F, which will take place in May, 2013 in Egypt**, this issue is also dedicated at presenting not only the objectives of the F2F, but also the preliminary list of topics to be addressed there. Looking back to the work done by network members during 2010 - 2011, **dlgnews** highlights the results of a document called **"Lessons from five learning projects implemented by the Democratization, Decentralization and Local Governance Network"**. This document reflects on the Learning Projects that were the high point of the F2F in Sarajevo. Looking forward, a summary of the **Concept notes for applied research and innovative approaches** that **dlgn** will address supported by IDS is also included.

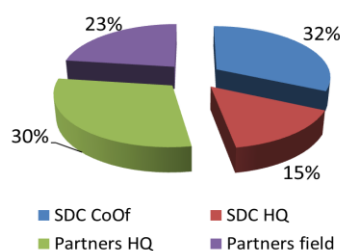
**Contributions from network members provide additional valuable content to this dlgnews:** SDC COOF in BiH presents a publication on **"Citizen participation in South Eastern European countries"** edited by Prof. Vivien Lowndes from Open Society Foundations; dldp shares a report on: **"Supporting Experiences in Inter – LGU Cooperation in Albania: Report on the Outcomes of dldp and Partner's Contributions"**. The results of the Exchange and Learning Forum to strengthen local finances in South and East Asia that took place at the end of September in Nepal precede LoGIn's contribution on the **"Appreciation Courses for development professionals"** and the portal launch: **"Practice in Participation"**. Finally, DESPRO Ukraine, shares the video **"Life in the new coordinates"** an example of good practice in local governance and service provision and the IDS Governance Team shares its **2012 Annual Report**, where information about the work they are doing with the **dlgn** is presented. Thanks again to all our members who have contributed to this issue!

With more than three years of the **dlgn**, we are pleased to see that our network has grown steadily since its creation in 2009. Currently, **dlgn** has 188 registered members spread out in 50 countries around the world. Around 32% of the members work at SDC's Coordination Offices (COOfs), 15% work at SDC Head at HQ: 53% are partners of SDC both at HQ (30%) and on the field (23%): program implementing organizations, competence centers, and consultants. If you want to know more about the characteristics of our Network please refer to the following link in our Shareweb:

[http://www.sdc-decentralization.net/en/Home/Community\\_Affairs/Members/Mapping\\_dlgn\\_members](http://www.sdc-decentralization.net/en/Home/Community_Affairs/Members/Mapping_dlgn_members)

Kuno Schläfli,  
Focal Point DLG, Western Balkans Division SDC

Institutional representation of dlgn



## Train4Dev/DeLog Course in Switzerland



From 27th to 30th of August 2012, the second open course on "Harmonisation, Decentralisation and Local Governance" took place in picturesque Thun, Switzerland. Around 40 international participants from 9 different development organisations, working at both headquarters and field levels attended this event. The participants actively influenced the dynamic of the course, especially two of them, who were resource persons from the first in-country course that had taken place in April 2012 in Mozambique.

The course was funded and organised by SDC in close cooperation with the [Train4Dev Expert Group on Decentralisation and Local Governance](#) and the [Development Partners Working Group on Decentralisation and Local Governance](#) (DeLoG). Experts from ECDPM and The Hague Academy structured and facilitated the programme.

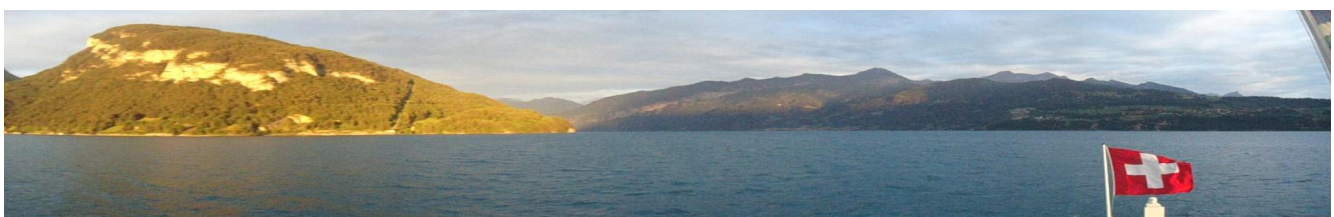


The objective of the course was to provide participants with a comprehensive understanding of the international aid effectiveness debate in relation to the concepts of decentralization and local governance, following the High Level Forums of Paris, Accra and Busan. At the same time, the exchange of experiences was encouraged through discussions, buzz- and break-out groups. Participants actively contributed to various sessions by presenting their projects and approaches to different challenges within decentralisation and local governance programmes. The first half of the course focused on topics on the aid effectiveness agenda and the main concepts of dlG, including political economy analysis. With this input in mind, sessions of the second half concentrated on the linkages between decentralisation and sector support, dlG assessment, harmonised and aligned support options and M&E in support of local governments and decentralisation.

Throughout the course, participants showed great interest and contributed to the event actively. The final panel discussion at the end highlighted the main challenges and struggles between theory and practical work.



This open course was the second of its kind. In January 2011, a pilot course had taken place in Brussels. The course was originally initiated by several members of DeLoG, who jointly decided that a course on decentralisation and local governance including an aid and development effectiveness and donor harmonisation perspective is needed. Thus, DeLoG became part of the joint donors' competency development network train4dev, whose overall goal is to promote improved aid effectiveness, and developed a joint learning programme (JLP). The JLP can be implemented through three different modalities: an in-country/regional joint learning, an open course for DP staff and an E-learning course, that will be developed by the end of 2012. The next in-country training will take place in Benin in November; the next open course is planned for the beginning of 2013. For further information about the course in Thun, the report is available for downloading at <http://www.sdc-decentralization.net/en/Home/dlgnews> together with further information about the next training in Benin.



## Network News

### Third dlgn F2F, May 2013 in Egypt

After a successful meeting in Sarajevo in 2011, and with a view of working face-to-face (F2F) once more, the third **dlgn** F2F meeting will take place in Egypt between the 13th and 16th of May, 2013. The objectives of this F2F are fivefold: 1) communicating and discussing Lessons and Products from the Learning Projects; 2) valorizing learning efforts; 3) sharing and learning from others; 4) conducting Research and 5) building and strengthening our community.

The F2F will focus on the following preliminary topics:

- Capitalizing the experiences of two broad learning projects: **“Outcome Measurement”** and **“Participation-Accountability”** - results will be shared and conclusions will be drawn on practical application of these topics on dlgn policy and institutional practices.
- Sharing results and lessons from the **capitalization of the decentralization support in BiH using visual approaches** – the added value of digital and participatory storytelling will be presented including their applicability on the evaluation of dlgn programs and on outcome reporting with special emphasis on stakeholder perspectives.
- Introducing results of IDS research on dlgn related topics - learning and discussing how to develop **practical tools, trainings, mirroring interaction**, among others.
- Capitalizing experiences with the various **Political Economy Assessments** conducted mainly by IDS experts in the Western Balkans - conclusions on the added value of their institutionalization including recommendations for strategy processes will be discussed.

This F2F will seek to build a strong link to the democratization processes in Northern Africa by asking the following question: “how to integrate democracy - dimensions in strategy and program development?” Reference to analysis and lessons learned from events with Int. IDEA will be discussed including the respective recommendations that result from them.

Also, time to reflect on the **dlgn** learning hypothesis will be provided addressing the questions: “how past and current tools and guidance from the **dlgn** were useful and came to application into SDC practice? What has proven to be useful, what is needed to promote them?

Please **reserve date and plan your participation**. For more information contact Kuno Schläfli ([Kuno.Schlaefli@deza.admin.ch](mailto:Kuno.Schlaefli@deza.admin.ch)).

### Lessons from five learning projects implemented by the dlgn

Many network members were involved in the five learning projects, which took place during 2010 and 2011: Election Support, Local Governance Assessment, Social Inclusion, Study Tour Guidelines and Sustainable Local Government Finances. Owners of learning projects, external consultants as well as a few participants have now shared the vast experience they made with these learning projects. The product of this capitalization of experiences is a short paper providing some key facts on the five learning projects. It analyses their objectives and processes and states the main lessons learnt.

The capitalization of experiences can be found at: [http://www.sdc-decentralization.net/en/Home/Practical\\_Learning](http://www.sdc-decentralization.net/en/Home/Practical_Learning)

**Do you have news or information to share in the next dlgnnews issue?**

**If so, do not hesitate to write us!**

### **Concept notes for applied research and innovative approaches - Preliminary Summary**

How can effective governance institutions support improved service delivery, particularly in post-conflict and fragile situations? How can international co-operation efforts be better aligned to enhance the impact of democratization and decentralization initiatives? With some of these questions in mind, the IDS Governance Team is undertaking a three year partnership with SDC to support the Democratization, Decentralization and Local Governance Network (dlgn) in conducting further research on these topics. The on-going research carried out by the Governance and the Participation teams will feature novel experiences and findings on democracy and decentralization to analyze and inform relevant SDC policy strategies in this field. The research topics will focus around four thematic questions:

- How to improve the quality of citizen participation, accountability, and representation in young democracies?
- How to ensure the sustainable funding of social inclusion strategies at the local level?
- How to better understand the political economy of decentralization to ensure that works for the people?
- How to facilitate non-violent transitions towards democracy in conflict contexts?

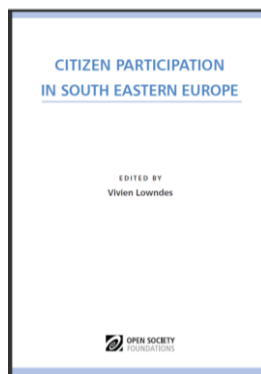
In a competitive process, the project management invited all researchers in the IDS team to submit short concept notes with an outline of research to be covered by this project. The imperative was that research proposals should link into one of the project themes, build on the researchers' own agenda and take forward SDC's interests.

This document is based on the initial concept notes submitted in response to the call. Some concept notes are currently in the process of being finalized; therefore, the exact content of some of the concept notes might change. A first draft should be available by end of December 2012, and the final draft will be available by the end of March 2013. These research findings will be presented at the next F2F, so that **dlgn** members will have an opportunity to get to know the work in further detail. The document can be found at: <http://www.sdc-decentralization.net/en/Home/dlgnnews>

### **Publication on citizen participation in South Eastern European countries, edited by prof. Lowndes, within Open Society Foundations**

*From Snezana Misic Mihajlovic*

International donors have thrown great sums of money at the cause of greater citizen participation in public decision-making processes in the new nation-states of former Yugoslavia. Now, after two decades of experimentation in this field, a group of LGI fellows have assessed the methods that worked well and present some recommendations on how to encourage greater and sustainable participation across the region. The publication claims that participatory governance is an approach to revitalizing democracy, improving local services, and regenerating local communities. It involves a shift from narrow ideas of local government to broader concepts of "local governance," in which multiple actors play a dynamic role in public policy and the delivery of public services, from the neighborhood to the municipality, and sometimes even on the regional level (Stoker 2004). The full publication can also be found on the following link: <http://www.logincee.org/libraryitem/29502>



## Supporting Experiences in Inter – LGU Cooperation in Albania: Report on the Outcomes of dldp and Partner's Contributions

*From Valbona Karakaçi*

The objective of this report was to document the contributions made by the Decentralization and Local Development Program (dldp) in the field of inter-LGU cooperation, and in particular to assess the changes observed as a result of these contributions. The report seeks to answer the following questions: 1. What do partner LGUs, the national government, other national partners and other LGUs do differently in the field of inter-LGU cooperation? 2. How are dldp supported activities aligned with national-level objectives in the field of inter-LGU cooperation? If you want to find the results of this report you can download it from: <http://www.sdc-decentralization.net/en/Home/dlgnnews>



## Exchange and Learning Forum to strengthen local finances in South and East Asia

In September, SDC and the World Bank jointly organized an exchange and learning forum on concepts and strategies to strengthen local finances for better service-delivery and improved accountability. 45 participants from seven South and East Asian countries were invited, including representatives of central and local administrations, as well as elected members of local and medium level parliaments. Participants from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Laos, Mongolia, and the host country Nepal exchanged their experiences on: measures to strengthen intergovernmental fiscal transfers; improving access to financial resources for municipalities; and local taxation and fees.



Key inputs were provided by Gebhard Kirchgässner, professor at St. Gallen University, various World Bank specialists, and many participants who presented valuable experiences from their countries. The LoGIn (SDC's regional South Asia network on decentralization and local governance) in collaboration with the **dlgn** played a crucial role in preparing the seminar jointly with the World Bank. In the aftermath of this event, LoGIn will offer follow-up sessions by linking-up participants for further exchange and will moderate e-discussions upon request, while the World Bank will offer participants to engage in a new comprehensive e-learning course.

## Appreciation Courses for development professionals

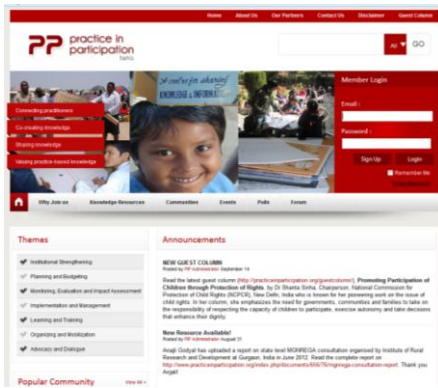
*From Preeta Lall*

LoGIn has supported PRIA (a national NGO working on knowledge and governance) in the preparation of five short-term electronic based Appreciation Courses targeted at field staff and entry level professionals in the governance sector. The courses are on:

- Participatory Activity Mapping in Decentralized Planning
- Participatory Urban Planning
- Participatory Social Audit: A tool for Social Accountability
- Participatory Integrated District Planning and
- Women's Participation towards Political Empowerment and Leadership.

The first session of these courses was offered in June. The second session started the first week of September and will last ten weeks. For more details click here: <http://www.pria.org/about-pria/our-divisions/piall/piall-distance-learning-courses/overview-current-course-offers/appreciation-courses>





**Portal Launch - Practice in Participation:** LoGIN (along with DVV International and IDS, Sussex) has supported PRIA in the launch of a new portal - PRACTICE IN PARTICIPATION ([www.practiceinparticipation.org](http://www.practiceinparticipation.org)). PRIA invites practitioners and researchers to:

- Share practice and innovations through the portal
- Facilitate discussions in the forum section
- Join as members of a community of practice and engage in reflection, and
- Disseminate information about the portal and its use to other networks.

The team at PRIA, which manages the portal, will be happy to assist any potential contributor in systematizing the practice that he or she may want to share. Please do visit the site, contribute to it and share your feedback.

### Good Practice in Decentralization and Local Governance in Ukraine a video from DESPRO

The Swiss – Ukrainian Decentralization Support Project (DESPRO) financed by SDC and implemented by Skat Consulting Ltd. since 2007 edited the film "Life in the new coordinates." This film presents a systemic view on local governance and shows a good example of how the interaction between community service cooperatives, local authorities, and donor organizations can improve the delivery of public services having decentralization in the fore-front. This film can be found on the Link: [http://www.sdc-decentralization.net/en/Home/Practical\\_Learning/Standards\\_and\\_Good\\_Practices/DLGN\\_Good\\_Practices](http://www.sdc-decentralization.net/en/Home/Practical_Learning/Standards_and_Good_Practices/DLGN_Good_Practices) or at DESPRO's website <http://despro.org.ua/en/video/11>

### Supporting the Swiss Development Cooperation on governance and decentralisation

*From IDS Governance Team Annual Report 2012*

The Governance Team at IDS has deepened its engagement in established areas of research and policy, and has opened up new ground on taxation, nutrition governance and post-conflict peace and state-building. Among a wide range of research projects, the Team is cooperating with the **dlgn**, and working closely with SDC teams in the Western Balkans. This collaboration is addressing fundamental questions about how governance institutions can improve the delivery of public services, particularly in post-conflict and fragile situations, and how international cooperation can strengthen democratization and decentralization. For more information please have a look at their Annual Report 2012: <http://www.ids.ac.uk/about-us/annual-report/ids-team-achievements/governance>

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