

## DeaLoG Project in Armenia

### NEWSLETTER №2

July 2023 – May 2024

*SALAR Project in Armenia 2022-2026: Support to Decentralisation and Local Self-Government Reforms (DeaLoG) is a project of the [Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions \(SALAR\)](#), implemented by [SALAR International](#) and funded by the [Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency \(Sida\)](#).*

*The Project aims at support the government of the Republic of Armenia with forms and strengthening local democracy, community engagement, grassroots development potential, service provision, building on a longstanding history of local self-governments in Sweden and on the global cooperation experience, expertise and networks of SALAR International. The Project is also part of the [Resilient Syunik Team Europe Initiative](#), which has been launched in January 2023 to promote sustainable socioeconomic development in Syunik region. It is the joint undertaking of the European Union, the European Investment Bank and EU Member States Austria, France, Germany, Poland and Sweden, with Switzerland also joining as an external partner.*



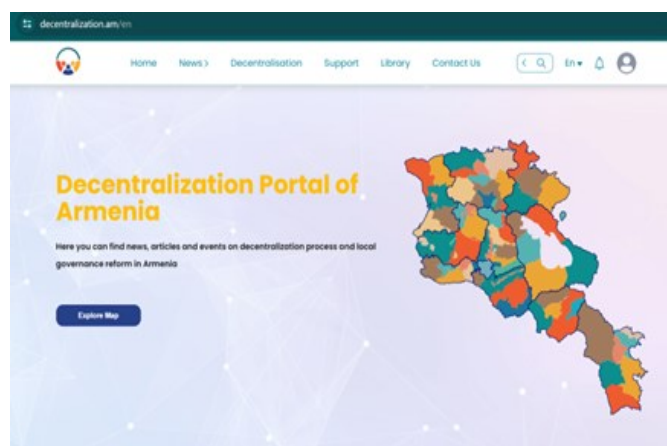
In September 2023, we had a planning meeting in Gyumri within our team where we designed the work of upcoming months and the second phase of the project.

#### **Policy dialogue, communication and advocacy**

On February 9, in the framework of DeaLoG Project we held the first **Advisory Group Meeting** on decentralisation in Armenia, where we brought together the key partners of the Project and the representative of the Swedish International Development

Cooperation Agency (Sida). The meeting has been the first in a range and aims at ensure a comprehensive approach in addressing decentralisation issues through regular facilitated consultation in the scope of our project.

Since last year the DeaLoG Project has taken over the leadership in reform communication efforts among all development partner active in a field of local governance and decentralisation reforms in Armenia. On January 25, 2024, we had the first **Strategic Communication Workshop**, aimed at launching discussions on development of a joint communication strategy on decentralisation reforms.



As part of the Project's efforts to raise awareness about the decentralisation and to support better communication with and among the key actors, stakeholders, reform advocates and potential beneficiaries, a joint online platform - a **Decentralisation Portal**, is in a process of finalisation. The Por-



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tal will be the main source of information on reform directions and current developments in area of local governance and decentralisation. It will store and channel key information – news, analytical resources, training materials, success stories, etc, on reforms at local level. The Portal is web based yet connected to wider information environment connecting relevant actors and stakeholders working in the field of decentralisation reform: [www.decentralisation.am](http://www.decentralisation.am) ([www.decentralization.am](http://www.decentralization.am)).

We also launched **our project website** in February 2024: [www.salarinternational.am](http://www.salarinternational.am)

**The Municipal Forum** is planned to become a regular exchange platform, organised within the framework of the DeaLoG project, within

which at least on an annual basis municipalities will have an opportunity for a frank and open discussion on what the future could hold in relation to the decentralisation agenda.

The first Municipal Forum (February 7, 2024) in Armenia therefore had the following purposes:

- To get familiar with international best practice through presentation and discussion and discuss possible ways of its localisation
- To promote increased cooperation and dialogue between local governments with the aim to ensure that local voices and needs are incorporated into the decentrali-

sation strategy and roadmap



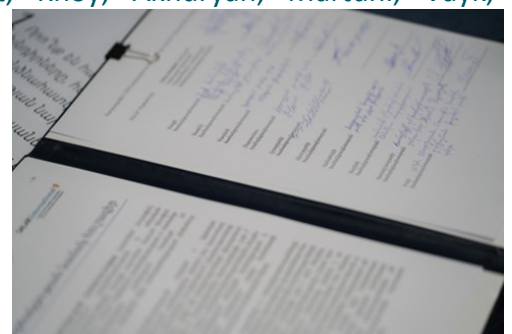
needs and wishes are included in the decentralisation roadmap and action plan.

This year, the topic of the forum has been “Decentralisation and Strong Local Governance as Essential to Country and Community Resilience”.

A new partnership with the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport (MoESCS) was established. An action plan on school network organisation and management, and its further decentralisation was developed, and as a first step a strategic partnership workshop was provided to the senior staff of MoESCS.

### Education Decentralisation

To facilitate creation of a more conducive environment for sector decentralisation, in October 2023 we had an open call for partnership to select municipalities and schools who agree to join efforts towards improved education and community development. In November we received joint applications from 10 municipalities (Masis, Hrazdan, Vagharshapat, Khoy, Akhuryan, Martuni, Vayk, Tatev, Tashir and Vanadzor) and 34 schools functioning in these communities. In January 2024 DeaLoG project signed a Cooperation Letter with all 10 municipalities.



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To support partners in boosting school-municipality cooperation, a self-assessment tool -



Maturity Model - was developed, followed by dedicated workshops with each 10 partner municipalities and their relevant schools. Over all results of these assessment workshops were presented in Yerevan in April 2024 with participation of all partners, inviting also the MTAI and MoESCS. The meeting provided also an opportunity for partners to discuss lessons learned and next steps, including preparation of school-municipality cooperation improvement plans.

In addition to these efforts, a functional review methodology was prepared and shared with MoESCS aimed at supporting clarification of roles and responsibilities, functions and tasks of different levels of government of Armenia concerning the education sector. The functional review itself is expected to complete during the next phase, depending on the decisions of MTAI and MoESCS.



## Fiscal Decentralisation

The DeaLoG project has continued the tradition of publishing interesting comparative analytical materials in a form of Blue Books. This time our new Blue Book is devoted to the topic of Fiscal Decentralisation – it is a Comparative Report on main aspects of Fiscal Decentralisation in select 9 European countries was prepared were the experience of Albania, Bulgaria, Denmark, Georgia, Moldova, the Netherlands, North Macedonia, Poland and Sweden. In addition, the new Blue Book has also a chapter, which analyses and illustrates the current level of fiscal decentralisation in Armenia in comparison to above-mentioned 9 counties (the report will be soon published on [www.decentralisation.am](http://www.decentralisation.am) & [www.salarinternational.am](http://www.salarinternational.am) websites and is available both in Armenian and English).

### Fiscal Aspects of Decentralization: An overview of key principles and European practices useful for Armenia

Kelmend ZAJAZI, Executive Director, NALAS, Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South East Europe

Elton STAFIA, Fiscal Decentralization Expert, NALAS, Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South East Europe

The Municipal Forum  
Decentralisation and Strong Local Governance as Essential to  
Country and Community Resilience  
7 February 2024, Yerevan

## Some statistics and achievements since July 2023

**More than 20 work visits to municipalities** with thorough discussions on decentralisation process and the role of municipalities.

**40 (out of 71) municipalities** attended the Municipal Forum and participated in discussion on decentralisation issues.

**10 municipalities and 34 schools** are our project partners in fostering school-municipality nexus.

**SALAR International is seen as a trustful partner** for both central government, municipalities and schools.



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