

## Strengthening Democracy and Local Government in Moldova

Written by Mirek WAROWICKI

The ENTO project aimed at supporting local democracy and local community development in Moldova with financial assistance from the Government of Japan, was carried out from January to March 2007. The project consisted of a mission and three training seminars.

The seminars were planned after a mission by members of the ENTO Bureau: Mirek Warowicki (Poland), Chief expert of the project, Boris Bakota (Croatia) and Boris Peril (Russian Federation) on 15 - 16 January 2007. In the training seminars in March, Ms Ludmila Sfirloaga, Vice President of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe was actively involved.

**Ms Ludmila Sfirloaga** (from the opening speech): "Decentralisation does seem to offer particular hope, and based on the experiences of new EU member countries, contributes to improving **relevance** and **responsiveness**. These, together with sustainability, should be the main criteria to assess the success of decentralisation and in a broader sense the transition."



During the mission in January the strengthening of local democracy in Moldova was identified as important, both in terms of the legislative framework and in relation to practice. Drafting and refining new legislation (public administration reform, decentralisation, public finance) is the first priority for Moldova now. This is understandable, since much work has to be done before the upcoming election in June-July 2007.

The current barriers to implementation in Moldova are, in many ways, similar to those in CEE countries, resulting from the resistance of several political and social groups at different levels. A significant imbalance may be observed between decentralisation of responsibilities and the decentralisation of public finance.

**Mr Valentin Guznac, Deputy Minister of Local Public Administration in Moldova** (from the opening speech):

"Establishing a modern local public administration system anchored on the principles of good governance - efficiency, efficacy, responsiveness, responsibility, and transparency in line with the most advanced European practices - is one of the main objectives of the Government "Modernization of the country is wealth of people", Action Plan "Moldova-EU", of Economic Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy and "Moldovan Village" program."

ENTO provided the training seminars, with advice and recommendations from practitioners and experts from Poland and Romania on how to overcome the main problems and obstacles in the transition process. Special attention was given to public administration reform, public service provision, public finance and management methods in local government.



Overall objectives:

1. Develop a common understanding of the current status of reforms in Moldova
2. Gain in-depth understanding of the main problems in the process of transition and of the technical components.
3. Identify how the experiences of other European countries, in selected areas, could be used as models and the approaches used and learning gained be implemented in Moldova.

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4. Understand the role of training to develop capacity at different levels.
5. Draft a sustainability plan that includes appropriate activities as a follow up.

The project has received much support from Mr. Vitalie Vrabie, Vice-Prime Minister of Local Public Administration of Moldova.

Quotation from his letter to Mirek Warowicki: "On behalf of the Moldova Ministry of Local Public Administration, please allow me to express our gratitude and appreciation (...). Presentations on implementing local public administration reform in both Poland and Romania were very well received by our officials. The information delivered was both timely and very much "on point" for our Moldovan local officials as I firmly believe that reforms or experiences in one country in the region may be very instructional for other countries, provided that the information gets to the intended target."

The program of three one-day seminars held in Chisinau on March 14, Cahul on March 15, and Balti on March 16 consisted of two basic parts. Firstly, official speeches from Mr Valentin Guznac, Deputy Minister of Local Public Administration in Moldova, Ms Ludminla Sfirloaga, Deputy President of the Congress, Mr Hideaki Noguchi, Councillor, Deputy Head of Diplomatic Mission, Embassy of Japan in Ukraine and Republic of Moldova and Mr Miroslaw Warowicki, ENTO Bureau member.

Before the panel discussion an overview of the current status of the main reforms in Moldova was presented by Mr Valentin Guznac, Deputy Minister of Public Administration. The second part of the seminars consisted of a series of inter-related panel discussions aimed at local government audiences on selected topics.



**Participants and seminar structure**

There were almost 200 participants in the seminars. The participants in the seminars represented a wide spectrum of the local government mayors in Moldova. The group of panellists was selected in order to provide different perspectives in terms of country and size of municipality.

The structure of the seminars consisted of short speeches, including introductions to the topics, presentations of inside

stories, descriptions of practices using case studies and suggestions for their use in Moldova. Initially, particular emphasis was placed on communication between panellists and the audience. For this purpose, before the statements of the Romanian and Polish panellists, the moderators (Mirek Warowicki and Boris Peril) encouraged participants to share their concerns and feelings about the current stage of the transition and the status of the implementation of the main reforms . This supplemented the overall picture of the main reforms delivered by Mr Valentin Guznac, Deputy Minister, and gave the panellists a better understanding of how to relate Romanian and Polish experiences to the Moldavian context.



**Practical issues related to the transition**

The first session provided a general overview of the main problems faced during transition. The remaining sessions presented selected issues with real examples and specific methods used in Romania and Poland. The following topics were presented by five panellists:

- "Main problems with the transition"
- "Distribution of functions, the delivery of local public services, local finance – how to overcome the problems, how to find support"
- "Property management, internal organisation of local government models implemented"
- "The role and form of training in the transition process".

Five panellists: Tomasz Kayser, Vice-President of Poznań, Stanislaw Kracik, Mayor of Niepolomice, Gheorghe Hritcu, Mayor of Scobinti, Ovidiu Ursache, Mayor of Letcani and Cezar Oladu, Head of the Department of European Integration and Development Strategies, Suceava Municipality, presented their experiences and views based on the transition process in Poland and Romania.- the topics above.

Among the key elements, both in Romania and in Poland, were mentioned as being property devolution and property management, financial autonomy, local finances, communication and cooperation with citizens, the implementation of new tasks and services and the related training capacity and network of local government associations and training infrastructure.

Joining the EU has meant intense pressure to meet EU standards in both countries. Most regulations and policies were implemented as in other EU countries through the cooperation of central and local government.

During the seminars the Romanian and Polish panellists provided a series of clarifications of the transition process and answered questions from participants. As practitioners, the panellists often shared their personal experiences. This personal shift, or focus, was useful in quickly building a good relationship with participants.

The panellists also shared many good practices of effective property management. Local public property and local budget, in their opinion, were important instruments in the marketing of particular local authorities in order to attract external investors, both national and international. The transparency of property records is added value for such investors. The next important issue was good utility service provision because new businesses soon became their consumers.

Questions addressed to panellists dealt with: - the duration of the transition; - citizen participation tools; - the budget formulation process; - the main revenue sources for the local budget; - a description of financial autonomy; - recently solved problems in communities; - the optimal management approach of utilities regarding privatisation; - contracting out; - budgetary units; - methods for attracting foreign investors; - experience in designing and implementing local development projects; - problems faced with EU integration; - the functions of citizen information centres; - the role of economic development departments; - forms of cooperation between the local administration and civic society organizations.



**Panel discussion served both sides**

Effective and efficient government and public administration requires, as in other EU countries, structural and procedural changes. Decentralisation, property devolution, real local financial autonomy, improved intergovernmental relations, cooperation with the nongovernmental sector, building institutional capacity and operation in the market environment

are key factors for local government modernisation during transition.

A general output of the seminar was that this seminar could be seen as playing an important role in identifying basic elements for successful public reform and the transition process. It can thus be seen not only as a meeting between practitioners structured as panel sessions, but as a panel study or research in which information obtained from the three seminars confirmed the same overall picture.

One of the crucial elements influencing the outcome of the seminars was the support and real involvement of the Ministry of Local Public Administration, in terms of both the political and administrative aspects, and in the organisation of the three seminars.

The need for capacity development in local administration in Moldova is becoming more and more acute as the central administration delegates more functions, responsibilities and tasks. Improving the capability of local staff, in terms of general managerial competence, is key to the development of local and regional authorities' administrative capacity.

A number of project concepts were identified during the mission in January and the three seminars in March to help address the capacity constraints and put the transition process in Moldova on a firmer footing with respect to defined priorities. The report on the results of the project and ENTO suggestions on further work in Moldova is placed on the website: [www.entonet.org](http://www.entonet.org).

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**A new way of sharing informations**

*Brief presentation of the brand new ENTO website*

*Written by Raffaele GARERI*

At the end of the month of April, 2007 the new ENTO website has been launched. The Province of Brescia, and in particular its own internal service CIT, Centro Innovazione e Tecnologie (Innovation and Technology Center), after a few months of hard work, built up the web platform that is going to replace the old ENTO site, after a long time of virtual life and visits.

The new website, based on an open-source content management system, has been prepared for solving and, hopefully, renewing some old conceptions about what the Web should be, and how the Internet should work to make the life easier: it has to be intended as a direct bridge between the ENTO institution and its members. In fact the main purpose that aimed the restyling of the old site was to give the opportunity to all members to communicate between each other "crossing the barriers".

Of course, emails already reach this goal successfully, but the idea was to create a meeting place for sharing

informations, experiences and impressions. A virtual archive to put all the material elaborated during the summits.

On this way, the second but not less important purpose, was to intend the new site as a sort of calendar, simple to navigate, giving all the necessary information about future appointments, expirations, event registration forms, useful draft programmes and things to do.

The old site was a static-content platform, not updated regularly and not interfaced with any database system, and the result was to navigate into an old and institutional boring site. This new face of ENTO is dynamic, and not only in a technical way. The informations will be updated very often, the material needed for the meeting registrations will be post in time and final agendas will be at the hand of members few minutes after they have been written.

So, feel yourself welcome to the new ENTO web home.

The screenshot shows the ENTO website homepage. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the ENTO logo and the text 'European Network of Training Organizations'. Below this, there is a 'Navigation' section with a 'Home' link. The main content area is divided into several sections: 'LATEST NEWS' featuring a news item about the 'Registration, St. Petersburg' seminar; 'What is ENTO?' providing a brief history and mission statement; 'ENTO activities' detailing the organization's work; and a 'MAIN MENU' with links to Home, Contact Us, Search, Newsletter, Bureau documents, and Members documents. There is also a search bar and a 'WHAT IS ENTO' section with links to Network presentation, ENTO membership, The statute, Becoming an ENTO member, Organizational structure, and Other sites. At the bottom, there is an 'ENTO ACTIVITIES' section with links to Seminars and conferences, Annual General Assembly, ENTO Projects, Best practice of ENTO members, and Archive.

Web URL: [www.entonet.org](http://www.entonet.org)

For any technical question or information about the site and its content, contact the webmaster:

Luca Beccalossi (E-mail [lbeccalossi@provincia.brescia.it](mailto:lbeccalossi@provincia.brescia.it))

## Registration to ENTO 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Seminar (AS) and General Assembly (GA)

26 – 27 September, 2007, St. Petersburg, Russia

ENTO has started the registration of the participants to the 20<sup>th</sup> AS "Education and Training for Local and Regional Authorities within the Bologna Framework". The Seminar is organised together with the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe and the North-West Academy of Public Administration (Russia). It is targeted at directors of training centres, training project managers, senior executive officers responsible for training and local public services, decision-makers, local and regional elected representatives, professionals - practitioners and academics working in this field.

Interpretation will be provided in English, French and Russian. The General Assembly will take place on the 27<sup>th</sup> of September.

The host organisation offers the excursion on the 28<sup>th</sup> of September.

Please find the **practical information** and the **registration form** on the website [www.entonet.org](http://www.entonet.org). If you are interested to participate, please complete and send the registration form by the 25<sup>th</sup> of July 2007.

Looking forward to welcome you in St. Petersburg.

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