

## Kutaisi Second International Forum

### Cities' Challenges and Way Forward

24 June 2021  
Kutaisi, Georgia

**Location and joining instructors:**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88428074761?pwd=aXExOU5TNndYNitSdjVua2FOM0hGUT09>

Meeting ID: 884 2807 4761

Passcode: 250532

[Agenda](#)

[Invitation](#)

Forum Starts at 11.30-14.00

09.30 -12.00 Brussels time

**14:15-16:00**

**Tbilisi time**

12:15 to 14.00

**Brussels time**

**Good Practices by Cities' in addressing the COVID-19 pandemic challenges**

**Mr. Frédéric Vallier – Secretary General, Council of European Municipalities and Regions,**

**Mr, Urmas Klaas** - Mayor of Tartu, Estonia

**Mr. Jacek Jaškowiak** - Mayor of Poznan, Poland

**Mr. Andriy Sadovyy** - Mayor of Lviv, Ukraine

**Mr. András Nemény** - Mayor of Szombathely, Hungary

**Mr. Visvaldas Matijošaitis** - Mayor of Kaunas, Lithuania

*Q&A*

*Moderator: Mr. David Melua - Executive Director of the National Association of Local Authorities of Georgia (NALAG)*

Good afternoon everyone, It's a great pleasure to open this session on *Good Practices by Cities' in addressing the COVID-19 pandemic challenges*.

I would like to take the opportunity and say thank you to National Association of Local Authorities of Georgia (NALAG) and City of Kutaisi to invite me today at this very important Forum.

Before starting my presentation, I would like to highlight here NALAG's role as CEMR/PLATFORMA active member, thank you for being such a trustful partner for us.

The Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) within its pan-European coalition of towns and regions - [PLATFORMA](#) works very actively to support strengthening the role of local governments and their associations and recognise them as a key player in promoting good governance, local democracy and the rule of law in Moldova, including Georgia and Ukraine.

We are convinced that Eastern Partnership Local and regional governments and their associations, in this case **National Association of Local Authorities of Georgia (NALAG)**, has an important role to play in EU-EaP cooperation in all priority areas of the European Union.

You (NALAG) have published very timely *a study on Challenges of Municipal Management during the COVID-19 Pandemic in Georgia*, which has been published and shared within our network.

When it comes to resilience, the local governments are the ones who are often the first to feel the strongest impact of conflicts, disasters and crises. They are under pressure to provide first response before a strategy can even be formulated at central level. The ongoing COVID-19 virus global pandemic has had an immediate impact on municipalities and regions, affecting people in their daily life, distressing healthcare infrastructures, schools and universities, transport and mobility, housing, companies and businesses. Without any doubt, as the level of government closest to the citizens, local and regional governments are at the forefront of this crisis management on the ground.

I would like to cease this opportunity of this meeting to share a bit more about what CEMR and its associations are at stake for the moment regarding the National Recovery Plans.

In the context of this pandemic, and in order to better cope with it, as demonstrated earlier, local management and local care was the most appropriate response.

As you surely know, a recovery plan, unprecedented in its form and scale, has been taken by the European Commission. 750 billion euros will be made available to best coordinate an European recovery. From this recovery, each State will be able to top up the billions allocated to it in order to nationalise its action and best respond to the needs it faces.

What we are calling and asking for as the Council of European Municipalities and Regions is **to include an additional level in the implementation of this recovery plan: the cities, counties and regions**. The territories must spearhead the implementation of this recovery plan as the level closest to the citizens.

Although the challenges are the same (economic recovery, territorial networking, management of public space, transport, public services, creation of social links), they take different forms. Who can say that the way of managing access to public services or supporting economic recovery

between Brussels, Stuttgart, Bilbao or Gdansk are the same: the size of the city, the financial means, the culture, the legal, economic and social environment are obviously not the same.

The European Commission, moreover, is not mistaken! It has called for a territorialisation of the recovery plan to take into account the differences between all the territories and to respond as closely as possible to the needs of the citizen.

According to **the joint COR-CEMR survey** which place from early-November 2020 to early-January 2021, we must improve LRGs involvement within the **tailoring of the Recovery Plan**.

Respondents representing local and regional authorities from several Member States (Belgium, Slovenia, and Sweden) explained having made **attempts to get involved on their own initiative but being unsuccessful**. In several other Member States (Finland, Netherlands, Romania) the respondents said it was too early to assess the overall level and success of their involvement. One respondent also deplored that – unlike with the Operational Programmes of Cohesion Policy – **there are no legal obligations for Member States to involve LRAs**.

Overall, however, the responses to the consultation suggest that **only a minority of Member States consult their local and regional authorities in the preparation of the RRP and that an even smaller number actually takes on their input**.

Seven respondents stated that the **process was led by a ministry with which their organisation has limited contact**. A respondent from the Netherlands explained that with several ministries organising their own consultation it was difficult for LRAs to know who to turn to.

I would like also to mention that CEMR has regular exchanges with its members the national associations of local and regional governments to better understand the most pressing challenges and raise awareness towards the EU institutions.

What is really important is the **national governments do engage in a regular dialogue** and exchanges with the national associations that represent local and regional governments so as to find the best solution possible to ensure municipalities and regions can **continue provide public services but also invest for the future**.

We cooperate with the European Committee of the Regions as regards the involvement of national associations in the drafting and implementation of the national Recovery and Resilience Plans in particular.

To summarise, CEMR together with PLATFORMA plans to continue working very actively to advocate for strengthening the role of local governments and

their associations in Eastern Partnership countries. It is also foreseen that PLATFORMA will continue to **support increasing the autonomy and competences** of local governments in Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine through the strengthening of their national associations, by creating **a multilevel political dialogue** at local, national and European levels, and **facilitating capacity-building** and **reinforce cross-border cooperation via peer-to-peer exchanges** between EaP local and regional governments and national associations, with EU peers, based on jointly identified priorities such as **decentralisation processes and public administration reforms, addressing the COVID-19 pandemic challenges** and to share good practice from our member municipalities, climate resilience, gender equality and diverse societies, state reform, and delivery of public services, etc.

I am very much looking forward to having a very fruitful and interesting discussions today.