

BEST PRACTICES IN DECENTRALISATION AND LOCAL GOVERNANCE

→ Best practices sheet

<p>Please send the duly completed form to the Secretariat of the DAL Committee, which remains at your disposal for any questions or comments. E-mail: dal.cglu@diba.cat</p>			
<p>Best practices in Decentralisation and Local Governance sheet</p>			
<p>Title: Seminar on decentralisation in the Middle East</p>			
<p>Promoting organisation: Office of the United Cities and Local Governments Lebanon, Syria and Jordan</p>			
<p>Territorial sphere: Lebanon and other countries from the Middle East and the Mediterranean basin</p>			
<p>Subject area:</p> <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> <input type="checkbox"/> Politics/ Law <input type="checkbox"/> Economics/ Taxation <input type="checkbox"/> Basic services </td> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> <input type="checkbox"/> Environment and sustainability <input type="checkbox"/> Capacity building / administrative structure <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Multilevel dialogues </td> </tr> </table>		<input type="checkbox"/> Politics/ Law <input type="checkbox"/> Economics/ Taxation <input type="checkbox"/> Basic services	<input type="checkbox"/> Environment and sustainability <input type="checkbox"/> Capacity building / administrative structure <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Multilevel dialogues
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<p>Start date: 1 May 2009</p>	<p>End date: 31 March 2010</p>		
<p>Summary of the initiative:</p> <p>Seminar on the state of decentralisation in the Middle East, organised by Lebanese local authorities in response to the presidential announcement about creating a draft bill for administrative decentralisation in Lebanon. Furthermore, taking account of not only the general lack of decentralisation in Middle Eastern countries, but also the efforts made by the region's local governments to strengthen their capacities, the seminar took on an international dimension by convening elected members of Middle Eastern and Mediterranean local governments. They discussed and identified the challenges and opportunities of decentralisation for a country's sustainable development. Consequently, the seminar allowed the debate to focus on administrative decentralisation in Lebanon within an international context.</p>			
<p>Relevance of the initiative with regard to the local and national context (economic, political, social, administrative, organisational context):</p> <p>In the local context, the announcement of the draft bill justifies the interest of the local governments to generate a debate on the issue of decentralization. Furthermore, as detailed in the previous summary, the same state of decentralization in the Middle East in general motivates the extension of the initiative to the entire geographical area.</p>			
<p>Objectives:</p> <p>The aim of this seminar was to bring together a variety of stakeholders, including politicians, experts and institutional representatives of all levels of government from Lebanon and Middle Eastern and Mediterranean countries to: 1) strike up an in-depth dialogue between Lebanese local authorities and representatives of the state's central government bodies to reflect jointly on a variety of approaches to decentralisation in Lebanon in the light of the new bill, and 2) to underscore the challenges of decentralisation in the region and the effectiveness of the role of municipalities in managing their territories, and to exchange good practices on the provision of basic local services.</p>			
<p>Parties involved, distribution of responsibilities and coordination mechanisms:</p>			

Al-Fayhaa Urban Community (Tripoli, El-Mina, Beddaoui); Committee of Lebanese Mayors; Technical Bureau of Lebanese Cities; Office of the United Cities and Local Governments Representative Office for Lebanon, Syria and Jordan; Barcelona Provincial Council; and United Cities and Local Governments' Committee on Decentralisation and Local Self-Government.

Impacts (on public policy, on political culture or on social cohesion):

This seminar allowed Lebanese local authorities to interact and exchange views for the very first time. It also allowed them to open a debate on decentralisation with central government institutions, in particular the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities, and the Parliament. Representatives of central government bodies welcomed this initiative and asked for further seminars of this kind to be held. Consequently, this seminar has opened up a path towards the gradual yet difficult institutionalisation of communication and debate between the different levels of government. Middle Eastern and Mediterranean participants expressed their desire to organise similar seminars on decentralisation in their respective countries in order to define a framework for intergovernmental debate on issues concerning them.

Transferability: Yes, this practice can be replicated in a different geographic and political context

Assessment (comments and lessons learned):

The variety of conclusions drawn showed, in particular, that:

For the Lebanese people,

- a) it is necessary to consider Municipality Act 118 of 1977 as valid, though the various decrees modifying it, and its erratic application, have rendered it ineffective;
- b) it is necessary that reflection on decentralisation be associated with the strengthening of local institutions;
- c) the state should rely more on local authorities to manage their territories and to implement local development projects;
- d) coordination between all stakeholders is necessary and, in that respect, the Committee of Lebanese Mayors should be a privileged interlocutor.

For Middle Eastern countries as a whole:

- a) it is necessary to acknowledge the complex situation of Middle Eastern local authorities, whose cultural and political diversity is superimposed on the internal difficulties of a number of countries;
- b) it is necessary to have regulations that clarify how powers are shared between the different levels of government, to have trained elected members and to ensure that municipalities have the resources necessary to act.

Additional documentation (a place to attach documents and web links that complement the sheet description):

Basic information on the promoting organisation (local or regional government, association of municipalities or the ministry that has led the process)

Name of sponsoring institution: Office of the United Cities and Local Governments Lebanon, Syria and Jordan

Municipality/ Province: Antelias

Country: Lebanon

More information: dal.cglu@diba.cat