



Mr. Pero Kostadinov
Mayor of the Municipality of Valandovo

Dear readers,

Being a Mayor of the Municipality of Valandovo is a great honor and an unrepeatable experience. I acquired the position of Mayor at a relatively young age, and I faced an absolutely serious challenge. I took over a municipality with long-term stagnation and slow functioning. However, Valandovo has always been a Municipality with unlimited potentials for development. The local self-government has a foundation that a successful story can be built on. Most important of all, we should face the problems, map the priorities, and create a functional system for their resolution and realization. As a municipality, we have an ideal geostrategic position, an abundance of sunny days, incredibly fertile soil, and hardworking citizens with a bright spirit and an open mind. We have natural beauties, archaeological sites of priceless value, we practice and celebrate multiculturalism and multiconfessionalism. We cherish the European spirit. We have all potentials for sustenance and building a future here. We have an obligation to create a system that has maximum efficiency and builds development. For this purpose we need the Association of the Units of Local Self-Government of the Republic of Macedonia - ZELS. We need ZELS in order to build a common strategy, to cope with the problems faced by units of local self-government on a daily basis. The problems and challenges of the units of local self-government are identical or similar. All municipalities face challenges of the same type. As ZELS, we have an obligation to act unanimously, emphasizing the crucial problems and the essential systemic deficiencies. The goal is to deliver systemic solutions that will create conditions for success in the work of each unit of local self-government, conditions for normal functioning of the municipalities, and predictable municipal development. One of the vital sources of problems is the low level of decentralization. Decentralization of decision-making and financing, and dispersion of power. It is the base that must be rearranged.

The units of local self-government need more funds to more effectively cope with social challenges, they need support and incentives for culture and sports, solutions for infrastructural problems, and improved conditions in educational institutions. It is necessary to conduct a functional decentralization. To transfer rights and responsibilities equally. Municipalities should be able to solve problems. Otherwise, the units of local self-government are doomed to failure. We should strive for a system of maximum independence of the units of local self-government from the central government, and make an opportunity to create policies in the long run. It is our duty to get rid of the two-decade model of a "Mayor-postman", to set goals independently, and to leave our own mark on the function we were entrusted by the citizens. The units of the local community would show greater functionality, and they would spend funds more rationally. They are directly familiar with the problems, and they are directly confronted with the citizens. They have a smaller administrative apparatus and the civic pressure towards possible irresponsibility and unprofessionalism would be considerably greater. In addition, it is very important to make efforts for greater involvement of citizens in decision making and creating a practice of different forms of direct democracy. I think it is right and pragmatic, encouraging politically active citizens and citizens – decision makers. This will contribute for the system to reject the "untouchable ones" and to minimize corruption. Hence, we will make legitimate decisions and we will create a community of responsible citizens. In this way, citizens would be the primacy, we would rebuild trust in politicians, and we would build responsible politicians and professional institutions. Building a solid and rapid cooperation with the central government, as well as an intensification of the Euro-Atlantic integrations is of utmost importance. The accession of the Republic of Macedonia to the European Union and NATO will imply a basis for fast economic development, guaranteed democratic mechanisms, and a secure future in a safe and internationally established state. Macedonia will necessarily build an independent judiciary, free media, professional public administration, better quality health, better education, and more effective fight against corruption. The Republic of Macedonia can and must become a prosperous and a developed European country. It possesses everything that is needed for success. We have rare natural beauties and potentials, unique and original traditional cuisine, historical heritage and cultural treasures, as well as hospitable citizens with great hearts. It is for us to show this to the world, to better organize ourselves and create an added value. We can use the experiences from the world and implement them in our country. We can create a safe and a modern country with conditions for a comfortable stay, and a country that is a part of the world tourist maps that must be visited. Macedonia can be an example to be followed.

Respectfully,

Pero Kostadinov