

THE Partnership for Democratic Local Governance in Southeast Asia (Delgosea) called for a more permanent dialogue to promote decentralization and the establishment of local autonomy in Association of Southeast Asian (Asean) member-states, as well as civil society, in a multi-stakeholder approach.

This as the Delgosea network recognized the importance of regional cooperation on the local government level in securing better living conditions for the people of Southeast Asia and noted that support for a joint approach by the member-states is also fast growing.

The final conference of Delgosea concentrated on the further integration of local governments into the Asean framework last week in Bangkok, Thailand, culminating the European Union co-financed project activities.

Hosted by the Municipal League of Thailand (MLT) and the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) on behalf of the Delgosea network, the conference was attended by over 150 participants, representing the project partners and Local Government Associations (LGAs), pilot cities, best practice cities, academe, the media, national governments and civil society organizations (CSOs).

The conference focused on sustainability of the project results and future possibilities for the network. The aim was to develop a strategy for a permanent dialogue on democratic local governance on the regional level.

The participants also sought to develop an exit strategy to secure sustainability and project results. Another important aspect was the search for organizations and institutions that were able and are still willing to offer a support system to cities and municipalities: the LGAs and associations on a regional-global level, such as United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) and, on the European level, the Committee of the Regions (CoR). The conference explored the role of these institutions and how they can contribute to good local governance in the Southeast Asian region.

“The ‘final conference’ will not be final at all, more the end of a chapter and the beginning of a

new one,” Susanne Stephan, project manager, said.

Stephan said the conference was an opportunity to look at what had already been accomplished and at the same time to discuss the roadmap for further learning and exchange amongst local governments in Southeast Asia as well as their stronger role at the regional level in the future.

“Two-and-a-half very successful years lie behind us and even more fruitful years are ahead,” she added.