

Over 400 Local Government Representatives at the 5th International Mayors' Summit: European Integration and Security in the Spotlight

April 12, 2024, Dănceni, Moldova - Mayors and honorable representatives from Ukraine, Moldova, Romania, the United States, Sweden, Slovakia, Lithuania, Estonia, Italy, the United Kingdom, Germany and other countries met at the International Mayors Summit on April 11, 2024 to strengthen cooperation and establish new partnerships. A total of 480 participants attended the event, including 60 Ukrainian mayors and community leaders.

For the first time in its eight year history, the International Mayors Summit, founded in Ukraine by the American Western NIS Enterprise Fund, was held abroad in Moldova with the support of the President of the Republic of Moldova, Maia Sandu.

With a common border of almost 1000 km, Ukraine and Moldova are not just neighbors, but strategic partners. Today, Ukraine and Moldova are working together on their way to European Union membership, addressing security issues and striving to make their communities more resilient and successful.

"European integration is the only way to ensure the prosperity of communities in Moldova, Ukraine and the European region. And the efforts to transform the country should be carried out through cooperation with local communities," emphasized President of the Republic of Moldova Maia Sandu in her opening speech.

The mayors presented their international colleagues with projects aimed at reconstruction and sustainable development.

For example, Mykolaiv Mayor Oleksandr Senkevych announced the creation of a website to monitor international aid, a transparent and credible system that will help establish trust and rebuild the city.

Mihai Șurcu, the Mayor of Oradea, Romania, shared his experience of attracting EU funding to build critical urban infrastructure, which ultimately helped attract investors, create new jobs, and boost the city's economic development. In his view, Ukraine and Moldova also need European funding to obtain even more resources and opportunities in the future.

"In modern global world, mayors are not just managers temporarily hired to run cities. They are agents of change, ambassadors and visionaries committed to creating sustainable, competitive and happy places to live. This is a challenging task, and it becomes even more difficult for Ukrainian mayors in times of war," summarized Iryna Ozymok, Founder of the International Mayors Summit and Local Economic Development Program Manager at WNISEF.

During the Summit, 10 pairs of cities were also awarded the Power of Partnership special award for their joint projects in the areas of humanitarian aid, cultural exchange, education, infrastructure, etc. The partnerships of the following cities were given this award: Mykolaiv (Ukraine) and Chełm (Poland), Vinnytsia (Ukraine) and Karlsruhe (Germany), Khmelnytskyi (Ukraine) and Šiauliai (Lithuania), Ciechanów (Poland) and Chortkiv (Ukraine) and Caravaggio (Italy), Kopychyntsi (Ukraine) and Liskeard (UK) and Cavarzere (Italy), Bilohorodka (Ukraine) and Tyresö (Sweden), Dănceni (Moldova) and Filipești de Pedure (Romania), Edinet (Moldova) and Alba Iulia (Romania), Băcioi (Moldova) and Oradea (Romania), Siret (Moldova) and Tulucești (Romania).

Moreover, Iryna Ozymok announced the launch of the study "Growth Poles" by the International Mayors Summit, WNISEF, CIVITTA, and EasyBusiness. The study aims to determine effective tools for economic growth for Ukrainian cities, suggestions for better regional planning, considering local peculiarities, as well as approaches for the rapid development of depressed regions of Ukraine. The concept of "growth poles" was first applied in France as a tool for post-war reconstruction, which point is to create an environment for decentralized economic development and support strong regions that can lead weaker ones. Today, this concept is successfully applied in more than 45 countries.

About WNISEF

Western NIS Enterprise Fund (WNISEF) is a \$285 million regional fund, a pioneer in Ukraine and Moldova with over 29 years of successful experience. WNISEF was funded by the U.S. government via the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). Since its inception, WNISEF's cumulative investments total over \$188 million to 136 companies and made it possible to unlock \$2.4 billion for companies in Ukraine and Moldova.