

Resolution 73 (1998)¹ on local democracy agencies

The Congress,

1. **Recalling** the aims of the programme of local democracy embassies which was launched in 1993 by the Standing Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe to give practical support to municipalities dealing with the aftermath of the conflict in the former Yugoslavia (see Resolution 56 (1997) and the appendix to the resolution);
2. **Emphasising** the political and financial involvement of the partner local and regional authorities and the work carried out by the delegates assigned to the local democracy embassies in Subotica (Federal Republic of Yugoslavia), Osijek/Slavonia, Brtonigla-Verteneglio and Sisak (Croatia), Tuzla, Sarajevo and Zavidovici (Bosnia and Herzegovina) and Ohrid ("The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia") ;
3. **Welcoming** the support given by the member states of the Council of Europe via the Confidence-Building Measures Programme, the LODE Programme, and the Special Account for LDEs ;
4. **Welcoming** the support given to the LDEs by the European Commission and the European Parliament, without which the programme could not have been set up ;
5. **Welcoming** progress made towards setting up a local democracy embassy in the town of Mostar (Bosnia and Herzegovina), as a symbol of the reconstruction of local democracy in the region, and the contribution that can be made by the LDEs to the accession of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the Council of Europe ;
6. **Reaffirming** the useful contribution made by the local democracy embassies in the regions where they have been set up and the value of the working methods developed in co-operation with all the local and regional authorities taking part as partners in the programme ;
7. **Drawing** attention moreover to the potential of the LDEs to apply the ideals and values of the Council of Europe at local level and to involve the partner towns and regions in implementing the Organisation's programmes ;
8. **Highlighting** the LDEs' contribution to the process of European integration, which ties in with measures taken by the European Union to support the peace process, alleviate tension, and promote democracy, the rule of law and civil society in the LDE host countries ;
9. **Conscious** of new requests from local and regional authorities in other regions of Europe and the amendments that will have to be made to the basic texts of the programme to take account of this development ;
10. **Conscious** that use of the word "embassy" can lead to confusion and erroneous expectations ;
11. **Decides** that "local democracy embassies" should be renamed "local democracy agencies" ;
12. **Invites** the Committee on Local Democracy Agencies to implement this decision and to make sure that, within a reasonable time-limit, all "local democracy embassies" adopt the new name of "local democracy agencies", or, should such re-naming pose problems, any other appropriate name, subject to the prior approval of the Committee on Local Democracy Agencies ;
13. **Invites** the local and regional authorities of Europe to reaffirm or step up their political and financial support for the activities carried out by Local Democracy Agencies, either by becoming a partner of a Local Democracy Agency or by making a financial contribution to the Special Account for Local Democracy Agencies administered by the Committee on Local Democracy Agencies ;
14. **Invites** jointly the Council of Europe and the European Union to contribute more substantially to the Local democracy Agency programme in order to cover the structural costs ;
15. **Approves**, pending the reply of the Committee of Ministers to Recommendation 33 (1997), the revised version of the appendix to Resolution 56 (1997) as given in the appendix to this resolution, including the rules according to which the LDAs will operate until a Foundation has been set up in accordance with the wishes of the Congress, as expressed in Resolution 56 (1997).

APPENDIX

LOCAL DEMOCRACY AGENCIES

FOREWORD:

The creation of *local democracy Agencies*² was one of the measures proposed in 1993 by the Standing Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe in its Resolution 251 for encouraging the maintenance and/or development of the democratic process at local level, taking due account of material and institutional differences between one part of the European territory and another, in order to achieve the aims set out in this document. This project was in particular the subject of Resolutions 25 (1995), 39 (1996), 56 (1997) and 73 (1998) and Recommendations 15 (1995), 24 (1996) and 33 (1997). The designation *local democracy Agency* is given by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe in compliance with the principles and procedures hereinafter stated.

The designation "*local democracy Agency*" may be applied only to those projects to which it has been awarded in compliance with the conditions and procedures hereinafter stated. This procedure is in no way preclusive of the support that the Council of Europe may lend to other initiatives to restore peace and uphold human rights and democratic principles such as Confidence-Building Measures. Nor is it intended to hamper other initiatives by European local or regional authorities or non-governmental organisations.

The creation of *local democracy Agencies* may be seen as a further stage in the humanitarian action and bilateral relations conducted by municipalities in Council of Europe member countries. It will require firm commitment to the defence of human rights, pluralistic democracy, in particular local autonomy, the State of law, a pluralistic, multicultural, multireligious and tolerant society on the part of all the local authorities involved.

1. The concept

Considering how vital local and regional authorities of Europe are to the working of democracy and how much they can do to generate a climate of peace and solidarity, it is proposed to create *local democracy Agencies*. *Local democracy Agencies* will be established by an agreement between, on the one hand, a host local or regional authority in selected European countries, approved by the Congress Bureau³ and, on the other, a number of European local and regional authorities which are prepared to keep a permanent staff on the spot for the purpose of encouraging or preserving the democratic process via intramunicipal and intermunicipal confidence-building measures.

A. Origins

The concept "*local democracy Agency*" was introduced⁴ and proposed by *Causes Communes Belgique*, supported by *Causes Communes Suisse*, discussed with the *Helsinki Citizens Assembly*, incorporated into CLRAE Resolution 251 (1993), and later developed and clarified by the Monitoring Committee set up under CLRAE auspices. The concept was further developed in Resolutions 25 (1995), 39 (1996) and 56 (1997) and Recommendations 15 (1995), 24 (1996) and 33 (1997) of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe (CLRAE).

B. Aims

The aims of a *local democracy Agency* are in particular:

- to contribute to the improvement of life conditions ;
- to foster peaceful co-existence and the development of civil society through mutual acquaintance and understanding, developed by means of exchanges and intermunicipal co-operation;
- to strengthen the democratic process where it exists and to put in hand confidence-building measures (in accordance with the scheme devised by the Council of Europe) through intercultural activities, human rights and peace education;
- to combat racism, intolerance and xenophobia by implementing non-violent solutions;
- to commit itself to a pluralistic society and to protect multicultural and multireligious society;
- to encourage the development of unbiased and pluralistic information;
- to encourage micro-economic projects, development and reconstruction aid;
- in general, to promote dialogue and mediation.

2. Role

The role of *local democracy Agencies* is to promote respect for human rights in general and to help implement and consolidate the democratic process in all sectors of local life. Particular attention will be given to:

- promotion of human rights and minority rights
- the functioning of local democracy
- socio-cultural exchanges
- economic exchanges.

The duties of *local democracy Agencies* may be described for the moment as follows:

- to serve as a temporary logistic base for humanitarian aid missions conducted by the founder municipalities of the local democracy Agency;
- to facilitate mutual communication between the participating towns and their neighbouring regions;
- to compile a record of local and regional, cultural and economic resources and transmit this information to the network of European municipalities and regions as a means of forging micro-economic and intercultural links;
- to support actively various local and regional activities in line with the objectives of the permanent mission. Active support may consist in:
 - helping with practical organisation,
 - organising participation in an activity of the municipalities and regions,
 - contribution to additional fundraising for activities;
- to establish constructive contacts - in a spirit consistent with the aims of the *local democracy Agency* - with local political parties, local NGOs, religious communities, youth organisations and the independent media.
- to draft proposals giving more impetus to the action of the local democracy Agency's partners.

3. Working methods

A. Working structures

In the current transitional phase, and pending the formulation of new procedures, the working structures will continue to operate as follows:

1. The Committee on Local Democracy Agencies

The Committee on LDAs was created in conformity with the decisions of the CLRAE. It is responsible in particular for giving practical expression to the concept of *local democracy Agencies*:

- by defining the conditions for the application of this concept;
- by taking decisions regarding the award of the designation *local democracy Agency*;
- by co-ordinating the actions of European local and regional authorities for the development of civil society and local democracy in any other appropriate manner.

Its primary tasks will be to⁵

- ensure more efficient co-ordination of the programme;
- ensure that the Congress can effectively exercise its political responsibility for the project;
- clarify the role and commitments of the partner towns and NGOs while preserving the delegates' capacity for flexible and independent action, in which the project's strength and originality lie;
- assure the delegates, who are performing a difficult task on the spot, of the Council of Europe's support, while setting clearer limits on their responsibilities;
- set up a network of LDAs which will be able firstly to meet the expectations of local partners and secondly to serve as a link in carrying out some activities initiated by the international community, particularly the European institutions.

2. The Assembly of Local Democracy Agencies

The Assembly of Local Democracy Agencies will bring together the members of the Committee on LDAs, representatives of the towns, regions or NGO which are project leaders, LDA delegates and the host local and regional authorities. It shall act as a consultative body and shall decide on the general directions of the programme. It shall meet on the convocation of the Committee on LDAs whenever necessary and at any event at least once a year. It shall also meet whenever more than half the number of LDAs so request, any such request being accompanied by a proposed agenda.

B. Partners

A *local democracy Agency* will be composed of the following partners:

a) a host municipality, town or region

- which has given its agreement to the general principles of the scheme, as laid out in the current document;

- where the democratic process is being relaunched and needs encouragement, or where the democratic process still exists and needs to be preserved;

b) at least three municipalities, towns or groups of municipalities, or regions from different Council of Europe member States

- which have given their agreement to the general principles of the scheme, as laid down in the current document;

- which agree to join forces in order to operate the *local democracy Agency*

- which agree to make a substantial contribution, taking into account their number of inhabitants and their financial capabilities, to the financing of the LDA.

c) the partner institutions

Council of Europe, European Union, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, etc.

d) and, possibly, NGOs or other associative organisations which may be involved in the creation and operation of a local democracy Agency

- which have given their agreement to the general principles of the scheme, as laid down in the current document.

One of the partners, a town, a region or a NGO, shall be appointed by all LDA partners as project leader.

C. Finance

- Funding for the *local democracy Agencies* will be provided by the local authorities or regions, national governments, the partner institutions (the Council of Europe, European Union, or other international organisations such as the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the World Bank etc.), and the partner NGOs or by contributions made specifically for that purpose to the LDA Special Account by European local and regional authorities.

- As a rule, the basic infrastructures (office and other accommodation) will be made available by the host municipality or region.

D. Permanent presence

In order to ensure a permanent presence in the town or local community hosting the *local democracy Agency*, the project leader, after consulting the partner municipalities, appoints one Delegate assisted by one or more assistants. They ensure that the *local democracy Agency* is present and visible at all times (See Delegate's duties below).

At the project leader's suggestion, the Delegate will be chosen by a committee bringing together the partner towns and municipalities after consultation of the Committee on local democracy Agencies (Council of Europe) and the partner NGOs on the selection. The LDA Committee is authorised to ask the project leader to put an end to the mandate of the Delegate. If the post of delegate is unfilled, the Committee on LDAs has the authority to appoint a Delegate ad interim until the partners have the opportunity to meet.

The Delegate must be qualified to undertake the co-ordination of assignments with a "human rights", cultural or even economic development background. The requisite qualifications may be offered by a local manager or ex-local manager, a former member of parliament, a legal officer or a civil servant. He/she should preferably have practical experience of the workings of a local or regional authority and have been active in a local or regional authority administration as an elected representative or local government employee.

The Delegate must have thorough knowledge of the way in which the founder towns and municipalities operate. The latter will provide the delegate with documents and a crash course on the functioning of the founder authorities in countries of which he/she has no practical experience. The Delegate will also be required to have the requisite qualities to undertake the necessary mediation for the implementation of the activities of his or her LDA.

The Delegate must remain in his/her post long enough to see the projects through (at least a matter of months). If a Delegate has to be replaced or if the permanent presence is ensured by rotation, the arrangements must ensure that the outgoing and incoming Delegates are present together for a sufficient length of time.

E. Duties of the Delegate

The Delegate acts as a focal point, responsible for gathering and centralising information from the town in which the *local democracy Agency* is located, the neighbouring region and the partner municipalities, and ensuring that exchange takes place. His/her principal task is to combine the duties listed below with proper circulation of information.

He/she shall be responsible for ensuring that the *local democracy Agency* is open daily to the public. The sign should bear the words:

local democracy Agency

intermunicipal and interregional mission organised by
[names of the partner towns, municipalities or regions]
with the support of the CLRAE / Council of Europe

He/she shall keep the partner municipalities, regions and NGOs informed.

He/she shall enlist the services of the partner municipalities and regions, in particular to provide training in local democracy practices, cultural exchanges and economic exchanges.

He/she shall work in close co-operation with the NGOs present in the field and active within the sponsoring communities.

He/she shall be responsible for organising the visits of various delegations and receiving mayors and regional representatives, Chamber of Commerce chairmen etc. from the founder towns, municipalities or regions. He/she will also assist staff members of the Council of Europe and, where appropriate, representatives of other European institutions or international organisations on official missions.

He/she shall organise intermunicipal exchanges of persons or property, notably between the partner local and regional authorities. Intermunicipal exchanges include in particular

- exchanges between local or regional government and local or regional representatives
- school exchanges
- family-to-family links (including reception or return of refugees)
- exchanges between local citizens associations or groups
- sport and cultural exchanges
- exchanges of local democracy know-how
- micro-economic contacts
- ...

He/she shall be responsible for the proper financial management and the administrative transparency of the local democracy Agency, unless this duty is performed directly by the project leader.

He/she shall endeavour, with the support of the Council of Europe, to obtain a legal status or official recognition from the national authorities, so that the LDA may participate fully in the development of civil society and become an integral part of the voluntary sector in the host country.

He/she shall lead the programme of action of the local democracy Agency.

He/she shall be given a contract with the project leader, defining his/her rights and obligations, his/her status and remuneration.

4. Establishing a *local democracy Agency*

- A host town, local community or region shall be identified and chosen by at least three municipalities, towns or regional authorities from three different European States.
- In accordance with the principles set out in this document, the partner municipalities or towns shall submit an application with a view to establishing a *local democracy Agency*. Relevant documents include in particular:
 - a description of the host municipality or region (geographical situation, number of refugees accommodated, description of the political scene, material needs etc.);
 - the reasons for choosing this particular town, municipality or region and the priority objectives of the *local democracy Agency*;
 - a description of the partner towns, municipalities or regions (geographical situation, population, political composition of local government, etc.);
 - a brief description of the partner NGOs and their ideals;
 - a funding programme for the operation of the *local democracy Agency* during its first year and forecasts for the following years ;
 - copies of letters or draft letters between the partner local and regional authorities and the host town, municipality or region, attesting to the formal constitution of the *local democracy Agency*;
 - a short *curriculum vitae* of the Delegate (or the delegates, if the permanent presence is ensured by a system of rotation) responsible for ensuring the Agency's permanent presence in the host municipality for the first year (as well as a timetable showing when the delegates are present if there are two or more);
- The application shall be submitted, together with the relevant documents, to the Committee on local democracy Agencies, for a decision as to whether to award the designation *local democracy Agency*.
- This designation shall be awarded for a period of one year and may be renewed on presentation of documentary evidence of activities over the previous year and projects for the years ahead.
- Projects so designated shall be eligible for political, financial and technical support from the Council of Europe under the "Confidence-building Measures" scheme. A file must be submitted for that purpose to the Directorate of Political Affairs of the Council of Europe. They may also be granted other support within the framework of the programmes of the Council of Europe and the European Union.
- Enlarging the geographical coverage of a local democracy Agency shall be subject to the prior approval of the Committee on LDAs.

¹ Debated and adopted by the Standing Committee on 28 May 1998 (see Document CG (5) 14, Draft Resolution presented by Mr Claude CASAGRANDE, Rapporteur)

² On 28 May 1998, the CLRAE Standing Committee decided to change the name of the programme of "local democracy embassies", as adopted in 1993, to "local democracy Agencies" (see Resolution 73 (1998))

³ According to the decision of the Bureau of the Congress on 3 July 1995, these countries are for the time being Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, "The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia-Montenegro) and Slovenia. In accordance with the decision taken by the Bureau of the Congress on 9 September 1996, extending the programme to new states shall be possible subject to the prior and express agreement of the Bureau of the Congress.

⁴ in co-operation with Médecins Sans Frontières (Belgium) and Amnesty International (Belgium).

⁵ Provisions of the decision of the Standing Committee of the Congress of 18 November 1996

Related Documents

Meetings

[5th Plenary Session of the Congress / 26 May 1998](#)