



A Local Democracy Agency in Azerbaijan: a tool for local democracy and citizen participation

What are the needs?

In an effort to support the development of local communities, local democracy and citizen participation in Azerbaijan ALDA is studying the possibilities of establishing a Local Democracy Agency in Azerbaijan. The LDA would have the following objectives:

- a) Facilitate the participation of civil society in the decision-making process at the local level;
- b) Increase the interest, awareness and capacities of citizens to take part in the decision-making process at the local level;
- c) Increase the awareness and skills of the local communities and local authorities to address the needs of citizens.
- d) Increase the interest and sharing of information between Azerbaijan and other European countries and stakeholders to enable closer cooperation and an ongoing exchange of best practices.

Why an LDA?

The future Local Democracy Agency will become part of the network of LDAs (www.alda-europe.eu) and its activities will be a practical exercise of policy sharing between citizens and local authorities. The LDA will support capacity building of civil society and local authorities and it will implement its activities at the local level. The LDA will by principle not be based in Baku, as no LDAs are located in capital cities. Ganja, as the second city in Azerbaijan, has been mentioned by most with whom ALDA discussed this question. The Local Democracy Agency will act as a promoter of democracy and local self-government and will also promote human rights and sustainable development. The Agency will be an operational platform of debate, capacity building and shared cooperation between civil society and local authorities locally.

The LDA will participate in the negotiation with civil society and local authorities and will establish a link between civil society and local authorities and as such it will represent a practical exercise of democracy and citizen participation. Once the LDA has been established it will be self sustained based on projects and the contribution of its partners. The Local Democracy Agency will operate as a locally registered NGO and will function as a coordinating and stimulating agency for the local society with the support of civil society and local authorities from Europe.

The role of the international partners will be to provide core financial support, participate in activities where they have the skills and capacities, to encourage their own partners to participate in the work of the LDA and to promote the work of the LDA in their own community and encourage wider participation. International partners will be regions and municipalities as well as NGOs from Europe with an interest in strengthening cooperation with Azerbaijan.

Other LDAs in the region of South Caucasus

In 2006 an LDA was opened in Kutaisi in Georgia and in October 2011 an LDA was opened in Gyumri, Armenia. So the LDA in Azerbaijan will also become part of a network of LDAs in South Caucasus that can facilitate cooperation and mutual understanding between the countries in South Caucasus to the extent that is possible, given the still unresolved conflicts in the region.



Map of the LDA network

What will the LDA do?

The LDA in Azerbaijan will be a tool with the following objectives:

1. Supporting participatory processes in decision-making at the local level; to help local authorities to operate in an open and inclusive way, to foster local authorities to take account of citizens' needs.
2. Improving possibilities, skills and capacities of civil society to engage in dialogue, advocacy and communication activities with local authorities - and at the same time to improve the capacity of civil society to represent its interests.
3. Changing citizens' approaches and improving their skills as far as citizens' involvement in local decision-making process is concerned; to foster citizens' will and ability to address their local needs to the local authorities.
4. Raising the level of cooperation and sharing of information between Azerbaijan and other European countries and stakeholders to enable closer cooperation and an ongoing exchange of best practices especially in the field of community development and citizen participation.

The Local Democracy Agency will be a local instrument in the hands of local actors, but supported further and self sustainable with the support of its international partners (civil society and local authorities). It represents a stable and long lasting instrument to promote local democracy and citizen participation.

Further information:

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