

Minutes of the Final Conference of the WTD project

5th of June 2014 : Council of Europe – Palais de l'Europe

Oriano Otocan, President of ALDA, the European Association for Local Democracy

ALDA's President welcomed all participants to the Final Conference of the WTD project, on behalf of ALDA – the European Association for Local Democracy and proud leader of the programme WTD Working Together for Development.

Mr. Otocan stressed the need of sharing good practices and ideas. Consequently, he remarked the specific purpose of the WTD project to improve the ability of local authorities and CSOs to become actors for development inside and outside the EU, to promote democracy, social justice and human rights, based on the method of multilateral decentralised cooperation.

ALDA's President highlighted the good quality of the projects submitted in the framework of re-granting scheme, as well as the involvement of 21 partners and associate partners both from the EU and candidate or potential candidate countries (Turkey, Serbia, FYROM, Kosovo) and from the neighbourhood (Armenia, Georgia, Israel) in the WTD project.

He expressed also the intention to look how the spirit of WTD can be carried forward post-2015. He pointed out the need to continue addressing post-2015 development goals through action at local level.

Mr. Otocan affirmed that empowerment of Local Authorities is a key issue and that it is easily on local level empowering citizens to actively contribute to development through their own initiatives.

Finally, he announced as focus of the conference, the bridge between the European year of Citizens 2013 and the European Year of Development 2015, in an attempt to link those initiatives and clarify the likely role of LAs and CSOs in the context of the EYD 2015.

François Friederich, Democracy and Electoral Assistance Unit, Council of Europe

In his intervention, the representative of the Council of Europe presented the work of the Council of Europe in promoting democracy, human rights and the rule of law, being ways to strengthen development.

"The past European elections of May 2014 must be seen as a potential alarm for the protection of fundamental Human Rights, making all projects linked to development more essential than ever", continued Mr. Friederich, referring to the previous Secretary General of the Council of Europe, who said during the 50th anniversary of the Institution that "**we have enough Europe (as institutions are concerned), we now need Europeans**". Therefore, he concluded that the promotion of a European Citizenship and the work of ALDA in that direction are key elements.

Antonio Marquez-Camacho – Head of Sector Local Authorities, Local Authorities and Civil Society Unit, DG DEVCO, EC

Mr Antonio Marquez-Camacho pointed out the key issue of bridging the EYC 2013 and the EYD 2015, while explaining that the European Commission's strong commitment relies in developing new policies for development involving as much as possible both Local Authorities and Civil Society Organisations, ensuring strongest impact in partner countries.

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Engaging LAs and CSOs still remains a challenge for the EU, having launched its development cooperation policy implementation some 15 years ago, starting ACP countries, Latin America, Asia and the Neighborhood. With the 2011 EC Communication, the priority to work with all levels of governance, including LAs and CSOs has been clearly stated.

For the European Commission, **engaging with the local level is of great importance**, both in the EU and in partner countries for delivering effective work and ensuring participation in the policy dialogue. Associations of Local Authorities are the main target, bearing in mind that they can have a multiplier effect at local level.

With regards to the framework for the definition of the **post-2015 development agenda**, a **Communication of the Commission has been issued in 2014**, according to which poverty eradication is likely and tackling development goals is possible if a framework of goals are set, both at global level and at national level.

Concerning the 2014-2020 EU framework, Mr Camacho underlined 3 points:

1. $\frac{3}{4}$ of the foreseen funding will be dedicated to actions in partner countries, with EU delegations implementing projects to support LAs and CSOs at local level, in consultation with local actors;
2. Support is needed in terms of policy, articulating how to work together at all levels, including the regional, the EU and Neighborhood level;
3. Contribution of the DEAR (Development Education Awareness Raising) programme, which should mobilize Europeans citizens on development issues, linking EU citizens to partners countries' citizens, multiplying effect is a main actor.

As for the **upcoming challenges** in engaging with CSOs and LAs, Mr Camacho highlighted that they are considered as being in the same category, therefore each must be treated accordingly, receiving funding on the basis of its needs, of the type of actor involved and the necessity for capacity building.

Mr Camacho stressed that, while there are several numerous networks and platforms acting at global, regional and local level, the links between them are still insignificant, making it urgent to coordinate with all stakeholders, including National Governments, who can have an impact on Local Authorities through the national policies. Ensuring funding according to their needs and avoiding dependency of CSOs to funding programmes appears to be essential, while accountability rules and indicators of impact measurement need still be clearly identified.

Last but not least, Mr Camacho underlined the need to ensure balance between European and non-European in the development cooperation policy, leading to a process of exchange in and out of Europe.

Mr Vasyl Hladiy, member of the Ukrainian Parliament

Sharing his experience on local self-governments, local governance and development issues, gained in his career and experience at the Parliament, Mr Hladiy shared some comments on the situation in Ukraine, regretting the current situation of local governance in the country despite the passing of a new law on local governance, the European Charter for Local self-

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governance being implemented only on paper. Citizens' lack of trust towards governments is seriously growing according to Mr Hladiy.

Mr Hladiy referred to the main challenges Ukraine is facing with regards to local governance, namely the minor size of local governments, with few tasks, responsibilities and resources in implementing policies at local level, and the deficit of local budgets, municipalities being directly funded by the National government.

Mr Hladiy stated that the next steps of reform in Ukraine should address fiscal decentralization as a key issue, indicating 4 stages approved by the Council of Europe:

- I. Reducing the number of numerous minor local governments
- II. Empowering local governments with executive powers to fulfil their tasks
- III. Prescribing tax collection to LAs guaranteeing minimum independence from National government
- IV. Communication between national and local governments, community and citizens must be a shared responsibility for all levels of governance

Antonella Cagnolati, Coordinator of the Lisbon Forum 2014

At the establishment of North-South centers some 20 years ago, the intention was to bring together Parliaments, LAs, Governments and Civil Society. The idea was to create fully fledged platform where countries meet at different levels. North-south Center has set up the Lisbon Forum every year, bringing those 4 levels to meet and discuss different issues. Since 2011, Arab spring related issues have been in the center of the discussions, while the cooperation with the EU and the Council of Europe has resulted in having the cooperation between LAs and CSOs very high in the agenda too.

Mrs Cagnolati pursued by referring to the Lisbon Forum 2013, which was devoted to governance, dialogue between these 4 pillars. It also addressed the importance of ensuring equal footing of civil society with other pillars. While the Lisbon Forum is not intended to turn into an institutional partner, the process is very important. According to Mrs Cagnolati, concrete conclusions are needed. *“Local authorities and civil society should cooperate more closely but HOW is the question. **How can we make sure that the civil society makes itself heard?**”* The importance relies in preparing the civil society, as it has a role to play in all processes.

The very first level is most important: relations between LAs and CSOs. It's the level bringing together the backbone of local democracy. It's building a platform for democracy, meaning the very essence of democracy at the local level. This is why, according to Mrs Cagnolati, institutions like ALDA have a very important role to play. **Citizenship should be taken on board** and measures are taken by the Center and the Council of Europe, complementary to actions of actors such ALDA. It is important to base our commitments and activities of these principles.

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Massimo Balducci, Centre of Expertise on Local governance of the Council of Europe, Professor, University of Florence

Development: Local and regional Democracy and CSOs

Development implies real factors such as per capita income, education, health services, social services, networks, public utilities. But development also implies Democratic institutions, Rule of Law and Human Rights. This aspects leads to development being linked to decentralization, as to issues of institutional development (rule of law, democracy, human rights) and issues of economic welfare (financial responsibility, decision making overload).

In the 70's and 80's, western European countries were stormed by a wave of heavy decentralization, which is required for welfare states, which in turn requires providing public services. Decentralisation can avoid a bottleneck effect, transferring routine (which amounts for roughly 80%) decision to the periphery.

As welfare services imply large amounts of financial resources, there is a clear need to control public expenditures, the best way of ensuring that is to follow the rule "he who makes decisions is supposed to pay".

According to Professor Balducci, instead of transferring resources from center to periphery, the transfer should concern tax imposing powers that can lead to an equalization mechanism. Local democracy has proven to be more effective than simple administrative decentralisation, through the direct involvement and accountability of actors, principles which are enshrined in the Charter of Local Self-Government.

In order to cut down costs, modern states try to curb costs by outsourcing, externalizing and turning back to CSOs (Swiss example of NGOs involved in supporting unemployed people, services to elderly in Belgium and Italy via cooperatives or ASBL; Denmark example of education managed by 'consortiums' composed of public servants and stakeholders).

Involvement of CSOs provides two main positive effects: it allows a costs' containment and the delivery of better decisions.

Modern society is a complex society and implies the use of complex technological tools. According to Professor Balducci, to make correct decisions on technically complex issues democracy is not enough. Democratically legitimized public officers need to be assisted by knowledgeable people.

As for development, the involvement of CSOs into the decision making process of public authorities can only be beneficial, as CSOs have proven to provide the necessary expertise.

Antonella Valmorbida, Secretary General of ALDA, the European Association for Local Democracy

Bridging the EYCA 2013 and the EYD 2015

ALDA' Secretary General highlighted how the WTD project upgraded an ongoing process and became one of the main platforms for developing capacities, knowledge and best practices for local authorities and civil society engaged in development, especially in Eastern Europe.

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She specified that WTD is a three year process where the partners became more acquainted with methodologies and exchanged their experience. Ms. Valmorbida defined the WTD as *Universe* which represents thousands of citizens, hundreds of civil society groups and local authorities, all members of the 20 networks (both CSOs and LAs) of the programme.

On this assumption, she affirmed that WTD became a single and unified stakeholder representing a point of reference for European institutions in identifying policies and practices, as well as an amazing gathering of leaders and driving forces for democratic changes, support of sustainable development, oriented to enhance the role of civil society and local authorities.

During her presentation, ALDA's Secretary General has also showcased WTD list of the partners and associates, and described its main actions. Specifically she pointed out the capacity building for Partners and Associates and the organization of constant working groups as well National and international thematic workshop aimed to promote capacities of implementation of the partners. Furthermore, she highlighted the activities of consultation carried out for the Communication of the EC on the role of Local Authorities as well Coordination and outreach actions.

Finally, Ms. Valmorbida focused on the link between the **EYAC 2013 and EYD 2015**.

If the EYCA 2013 oriented the process towards a more participative approach in Europe and close to citizens, based on solidarity, the EYD 2015 puts emphasis on the role of citizens and the fact that Development should be understood as a matter of relevance for all citizens.

To conclude, she affirmed that WTD could make the bridge between these years, so it is important to take into account lessons learnt from it.

Partners interactive session: 11:30-12:45

TECLA: Ms Annachiara Stefanucci [see presentation](#)

TECLA is an Association totally participated by Local Authorities or their Associations and Foundations. It is active in Rome and Brussels with two operational offices. It aims to assist local institutions to improve their capacities and competences to seize the financial opportunities offered by EU as well as to spread information on EU policies and strengthen internal competences of local administrations on EU topics. It is engaged also in promoting the participation of Italian local authorities in international thematic networks and European initiatives. Among its Associate Members there are more than 40 Local Authorities.

Through WTD, TECLA enhanced its efforts to assist and strengthen the role of Italian LAs as development actors, in a crucial context. TECLA own information channels as well as a direct involvement of some of its associated LAS, have been decisive to develop information and mobilisation actions. Furthermore TECLA supported the decentralisation action.

In the framework of the re-granting schemes two projects has been selected, the **A SUD** and the **CENTRO NORD SUD** project. To promote discussion on the project results and main conclusions for post-2015 development Policy, TECLA organized The National Workshop of Pisa on the 27^o of May 2014.

Following the lessons learnt from WTD, TECLA pointed out the key role of the cooperation between LAs and CSOs and the need of supporting decentralisation as well as education on development.

CEEEN: Mr.Dragos Cuta [see powerpoint presentation](#)

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The Central and Eastern European Citizens Network (CEECN) was created to provide opportunities to promote citizen participation in the CEE region and provide grassroots initiatives with the chance to learn and exchange experiences and ideas. It includes more than 30 member organizations in 18 post-communist countries.

Citizens Network aims to increase the general public's awareness of the potential that citizen initiatives can have and their positive impacts throughout the CEE region. Secondly, it pursues the aim to increase skills and capacities of citizens to more effectively participate in local and national development.

In the framework of the results of WTD, the CEECN representative, Mr. Cuta remarked that cooperation with partners helped to shape a new perspective and to expand knowledge and skills of members in area of Development Aid. Furthermore, he explained that project design facilitated practical experience for four member organizations, so that concrete projects were prepared and carried out.

Finally, CEECN representative remarked the need of finding new tools to achieve goals of Citizens Network as well as the importance to help to bridge the gap between EU members and non EU members. Mr. Cuta highlighted also the priority to increase cooperation between civil society and local authorities, based on a new way of thinking and seeing role of civil society.

LALRG: Mrs. Elita Kresse [see presentation](#)

In her presentation, Elita Kresse, Adviser on Foreign Affairs issues for the Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments introduced the WTD project implementation in Latvia.

She remarked that a National Workshop "Development cooperation – opportunities for Latvian self-governments" was organized by the LALRG in September 2012, with the main objectives to strengthen the cooperation between LAs and CSOs and to promote awareness raising and better understanding of development issues.

In the framework of the Re-granting scheme, call for project applications in Latvia was opened to LAs and CSOs in December 2012.

In February 2013 three projects were selected, which were co-financed with up to 2,000 €, and up to 50% of the project budget. Projects were proposed by three municipalities in cooperation with municipalities of Georgia, Belarus, and Moldova.

As results of the implemented activities, Ms. Kresse highlighted the raised public and citizens' awareness, skills and capacities on issues related to the development cooperation, as well as the active role of LAs and CSOs in the implementation of EU development policy and issues such as sustainable development and citizen empowerment.

NALAG – Mr David Melua

NALAG has benefited from its inclusion in the WTD project, with the participation to specific Trainings on fiscal decentralization, territorial cooperation, exchanges of information and networking possibilities. The project gave the possibility to find partners especially those LA associations who are part of the project. For instance, NALAG and Marmara Association decided to organize common forum that will be take place in September 2014.

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As for the future of this cooperation, the practice of cooperation of WTD will stay among the partners even though the project is coming to the end. ALDA and the LDAs will be supporting in maintaining these relationships.

Local governance in Ukraine – 14:00-16:00

Marité Moras, Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, Council of Europe

Mrs Moras presented the main objectives of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, starting with the monitoring of the implementation of the European Charter of Local Self-Governance and making recommendations to the 47 member states of the Council of Europe for ameliorating the situation of local governance. The Congress is also running election observation missions. The Congress was the only observer in mission in Ukraine on the 25th of May 2014, where partial local elections were held together with national elections. In this particular mission, the observation of local elections was less important compared to the importance of getting involved in the electoral process.

The Congress is to help countries implement its recommendations. In Ukraine, Mrs Moras stated that the Congress agreed with the present government to have an active cooperation, which will help them decide and improve. The need to work at the closest level is of great relevance, and that is why the work of the Congress and of organizations such as ALDA is important, strengthening democratic values at the local level, engaging citizens in the decision making process, facilitating links between CSOs and LAs being major points. The Congress has noticed a very positive improvement of LAs and the action of ALDA since its creation has made an important stakeholders in the implementation of considerable programmes.

In the end of her intervention, Mrs Moras mentioned the preparation of seminars of the Congress in Ukraine which intends to put together NGOs and young leaders, in order to put in practice the empowerment of citizens and bringing closer citizens and authorities.

Mykhaylo Nakhod, Civil Society Forum for Eastern Partnership, national platform for Ukraine

During his intervention, Mr Nakhod said that his organization is dealing with elections, policy analysis, democracy development and e-governance at regional level. Ukrainian legislation recognizes the right for local communities to participate in the decision making process (local referendums, local initiatives, public hearings, etc). Nevertheless, he regretted the lack of implementation of this prerogative: for instance, local referendums require adoption of special law which is lacking.

Mr Nakhod referred to the following positive examples of cooperation between CSOs, the national government's bodies and LAs:

- establishment of public council of state and local authorities, allowing joint project implementation, reanimation package of reforms at public initiative. The public councils were established in 2010 by the government, and have a consultative and advisory function to the authorities, also ensuring a certain control of these bodies.

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- Regional programmes for CSOs' development, prepared by regional administrations and adopted by regional councils in each Ukrainian region.
- Participation of CSOs in local development strategies more and more commonly established in municipalities.
- Reanimation packages concerning reform initiatives, including 13 Working groups dedicated to decentralization, territorial cooperation etc. In those Working Groups, Mr Nakhod stated that the role of ALDA may be of great support in this field.

Pursuing his intervention, Mr Nakhod referred to local and national projects of interest which are contributing in improving local governance in Ukraine:

- community based approach to local development project
- open city: strengthening citizens participation in the local community development
- monitoring of citizens access to the cities general plans
- monitoring of local council of councilors activity
- Establishment and support of people's self-organization authorities
- Strategic planning and promoting economic development.

In his final remarks, Mr Nakhod presented the following recommendations:

- i. establishment of the Local Democracy Agency in Dnepropetrovsk in the near future
- ii. Further develop standing programs of cooperation between Ukrainian and EU member states' local authorities and civil society organizations
- iii. Improve the expertise assistance and resources support for decentralization and territorial reform
- iv. Establishment and support of the network of NGOs for strengthening active cooperation and information exchange.

For Mr Nakhod, decentralization does not stand as a value in itself, as it brings conflictual situations which can ruin statehood. It's therefore crucial to make a balance in the process of decentralization, putting forward communities in the decentralization process.

MAURICE CLAASSENS, Senior coordinator, Solidar

Mr Claassens said that sustainable strategies for the future of Ukraine are absent. De-escalation of the crises will cost 5 million and an additional 18 million. The G7 has adopted recommendations on Ukraine, but they are not compulsory and important stakeholders such as Russia are not obliged to take them on board, while the combats are still continuing.

Solidar is an organization of welfare providers in Europe, providing mostly social services, social movements, trade unions, CSOs to work to deliver better services, conducting activities to meet people's needs.

Partnership between LAs and CSOs which advocate structural changes can be actors of change by helping in drafting legislation, but the question of healthcare, maternity care should be addressed. We need honest civil society to work together.

Do mission to Ukraine as CSO to meet the needs of the people and support this cause, to meet political bobos that change can be possible if they go out of their confort zone.

The Marshall plan should become a possibility for Ukraine, according to Mr Claassens. With regards to the right framework, the ENP provides sufficient angles to tackle the problem, stated Mr Claassens. A special Marshall plan together with the member states (with growing interests in Ukraine) could be a good option. The philosophy of Solidar is not to dictate what should be done but rather enable partners to define the needs of their constituencies, action

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plans and Solidar, as a solidarity network will try at the national level and at the EU to find funding for them.

Oksana Remiga – UNDP Ukraine

[See presentation](#)

In her intervention Ms. Remiga, Senior Programme Manager of Local Development, Human Security Cluster UNDP Ukraine, presented actions and results of the UNDP support within Institutional and Social Context in Ukraine.

She pointed out the aim to react to the governance deficiencies as well as the Human Rights needs by a flexibility of approach and an impartial, apolitical focus which allows supporting development and governance work for 20 years in every region and hundreds of villages and municipality.

Ms. Remiga remarked that by the previous interventions in different projects area, more than 20.000 local activists and local authorities were trained, more than 3100 communities were supported and 2800 community projects implemented. Specifically, preconditions for better health as well as a favorable environment for better quality of education have been created.

Ms. Remiga explained that several actions to foster municipal governance and support the National policy making process have been also carried out. She remarked that the mind-set of population is changing towards more active position in the local development and the local authorities are applying UNDP approach on the basis of local resources. With regards to this, she underlined that the sustainable development concept has been promoted and introduced as a training course.

Ms. Remiga showcased also the results of the sociological surveys. With regards to this she underlined the effectiveness of interactions with local governments as well as the improvements in the accessibility of local officials.

Furthermore, she announced that next steps will aim to guarantee both an immediate and short to medium support on different levels, by taking into account the policy and legal obstacle and the need of a comprehensive development programme on the local level.

To conclude, Ms. Remiga stressed that changes in perception require a lot of time and resources.

Ewa Woods – Lower Silesia Region, Brussels office Director

In her intervention, Mrs Woods pointed out that development is about sharing and sharing is about solidarity. Celebrating 25 years of democratic changes in Poland, she said that its crucial to underline, while being already 10 years in the EU, Poland is still young in the EU. She referred to the participation in last European elections, showing the people need more information.

With the establishment of the LDA Dnipropetrovsk, it is possible to channel the existing cooperation with Ukraine, building critical mass of people's involvement. The project has been launched a year and half ago, a project that does intends to be a political involvement but rather but a group of actors and friends from Dnipropetrovsk willing to make it happen. Mrs Woods stressed the fact the idea of LDA is "to share and not to teach". NGOs,

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associations, universities should be active in the activities of the LDA, as a multilevel and multi-stakeholder structure.

As for the current situation, Mrs Woods stressed the need to rebuild trust between the government, social organizations in Ukraine and people level.