

## **SPEAKING POINTS FOR AMBASSADOR VLADIMIR RISTOVSKI**

### **Representative of the Secretary General in charge of the co-ordination of the co-operation programmes in Ukraine, Council of Europe**

*18 May 2015, Dnipropetrovsk, Ukraine*

*Opening event of the Local Democracy Agency Dnipropetrovsk*

- Ladies and gentlemen, it is my pleasure today to assist to a historical event – the opening of the Local Democracy Agency in Dnipropetrovsk.
- I have not only witnessed, but been part of the work of ALDA and of the Local Democracy Agencies in the Western Balkans. The set up of a Local Democracy Agency carries with it a tremendous impact on the community involved, by addressing the local needs and empowering all actors involved to become real agents of change.
- The success of the Local Democracy Agencies in the Western Balkans fostering good local governance, community development, and European integration are blatant. As an example, the work carried out by ALDA and the three LDAs in Croatia was instrumental to the country accession to the European Union in 2013.
- Structure and processes are empty words without skills, passion, and dedication. It is therefore not a surprise to me that a particularly enthusiastic, committed, and experienced international team led by the President Oriano Otočan – representative of the Istria Region (Croatia) and by the Secretary General Antonella Valmorbidia, who was also the Director of one of the LDA before the establishment of ALDA, managed to progressively enlarge its activities.
- When 11 Local Democracy Agencies were fully operational in the Balkans, following the policy of support to local governance and decentralisation of the Council of Europe and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, the network was expanded to the Eastern Partnership area. In 2006, the LDA Kutaisi – Georgia was officially opened, and in 2011 the LDA Gyumri, in Armenia, was opened. They quickly rooted in their communities as key actors for the development at the local level, thus further validating the concept of Local Democracy Agency as a unique tool to promote democracy and development.
- The Local Democracy Agencies are a key tool initiated by the Council of Europe to foster local governance. ALDA has proved to be so effective in pursuing its mission that it has been able to progressively enlarge its scope, now encompassing some of the Council of Europe's neighbouring regions.
- At the same time, the tight collaboration between ALDA, the network of Local Democracy Agency, and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe marks their importance to foster decentralisation in the enlarged Europe. The partnership is strong and substantial.

- The Council of Europe reaffirms their constant support to ALDA and to the LDAs network. We are extremely happy and excited about the opening of the Local Democracy Agency in Dnipropetrovsk, and hope that this will represent the first of several LDAs in Ukraine. We wish the new Local Democracy Agency and all partners a very fruitful cooperation!