



With the support of



May 2004

Doc (10) 78

Newsletter 2004/I January – May 2004
Association of Local Democracy Agencies
Further news and LDAs activities on www.ldaaonline.org

Compiled by Dorothee Fischer, Press Officer and Joint Project Manager, ALDA

Newsletter 2004/I January – May 2004

Published by the Association of Local Democracy Agencies

Contents

ALDA Activities

- 1) Launch of the Programme "Local Development in the Balkans"
- 2) Miljenko Turniski, Delegate LDA Osijek, new Representative of the Consultative Committee in the ALDA Governing Board
- 3) First Governing Board ALDA, hosted by East Staffordshire Borough Council
- 4) EU Enlargement as an Opportunity for Municipal Development – the EU Mayors Programme
- 5) Visit of the ALDA Director to the EU Mayors' Partners in Lithuania 18th to the 21st of February 2004
- 6) Message from Association of the LDAs on the Bomb Attacks in Madrid and the Recent Upheavals in Kosovo and Serbia
- 7) The Association of LDAs attended the 7th Steering Committee of the Programme "Working Together"
- 8) ALDA Fact-Finding Mission in Georgia
- 9) Successful Networking at Civitas Non-Profit Fair
- 10) Starting supporting programme for partnership for the LDA (budget line CPLRE)
- 11) Presentation of the assessment on the situation of sustainable development and protection of environment (supported by Geneva) for 11 LDAs (including Mostar)
- 12) Launch of the programme "Capacity Building for local Government and civil society in SEE", supported by MFA Italy in co-operation with ANCI (association of Italian towns) and the programme "Italian cities for the cities of the Balkans"
- 13) Approval and start up of the programme "Including civil society into the decision making process at the local level as a common value in Europe", supported by DG Education and Culture, European Union, planned conference Barcelona, 1st and 2nd of July 2004
- 14) Approved programme by Norway for the LDA network, Local economic development and entrepreneurship- to be started second phase of 2004
- 15) Meeting of Italian partners in Cremona, 5th of March 2004
- 16) Successful negotiations for the second phase of the programme supported by Irish Aid in Montenegro, Kosovo and Serbia.
- 17) Translation of most of the material of the ALDA into local languages of the Balkans, soon on our website
- 18) Conclusion of the programme," Development of Democratic Citizenship and responsive leadership at the local level in BiH and S&M", supported by the Council of Europe

LDA Activities

- 1) Cooperation between LDAs and the Integrated Project "Responses to Violence in Everyday Life in a Democratic Society"
- 2) Assessment Report on "Sustainable Development and Protection of Environment in South-Eastern Europe" Published
- 3) LDA Sisak Project: "Promoting Effective Local Level Democracy in Croatia", European Commission CARDS Stabilisation Programme
- 4) The Second Partners' Meeting for LDA Subotica in Brussels

- 5) LDA staff got trained in communication skills, Osijek (Croatia), 21st-24th of March 2004, supported by LGI - Budapest
- 6) The partner of the LDA Central and Southern Serbia, the city of Reggio Emilia, is now officially twinned with the city of Kragujevac in Serbia, ,
- 7) The closure of the LDA Sisak project: "The exchange of best practices and the support to the development of the Nature Park Lonjsko Polje
- 8) Potential Partners Meeting for the future LDA in Mostar
- 9) 4th Anniversary of the Local Democracy Agency of Prijedor (BiH)
- 10) Partner meeting LDA Ohrid, in Kardica, 21st of April 2004
- 11) Partner meeting LDA Central and Southern Serbia in Suresnes, Emiliano Bertoldi Delegate and Suresnes (France) Partner leader
- 12) New Delegate in LDA Montenegro, Kerim Medjedovic
- 13) New Delegate in LDA Zavidovici, Simonetta Donsante
- 14) Training for Delegates in Zavidovici – 1st meeting for the Local Development programme, Supported by France, 19th-21st of April 2004

Partners

- 1) Lithuania enters the European Union

Miscellaneous

- 1) European Policy Centre Conference : Transforming the Western Balkans, Regional Co-operation : no future without it?

Contacts established

ALDA Agenda May – August 2004

Contact

Dorothee Fischer, Press Officer and Joint-Project Manager ALDA,

dorothee.fischer@aldaintranet.org

Tel.: 0033 3 90 21 45 93

ALDA Activities

1. Launch of the programme "Local Development in the Balkans"

With a coordination meeting in Strasbourg on 18 December 2003 the programme "Action for Local Development in the Balkans" sponsored by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs was launched. The programme consists of a cycle of 4 seminars to be held in 2004. The first of these seminars took place in Zavidovici (Bosnia and Herzegovina) from the 19th to the 21st of April. The following seminars are expected to take place in Montenegro, Kosovo and Macedonia.

Representatives of all ten Local Democracy Agencies are among the participants. The project is based on a Training of Trainers methodology. For the next seminar in Rozaje (Serbia-Montenegro, from the 21st to the 23rd of June) the animators will have to launch the process of identifying the workgroup that they will have to animate and to prepare a first assessment of the economical needs of their areas. This one-year project will enhance the Association of LDAs as a network and promote the role of the LDAs in the field of economic development.

The Association of the Local Democracy Agencies is also very pleased to have the support of different French partners for the implementation of the project: French Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Agriculture, the Betton-Montenegro Association, Cités Unies of France and the city of Suresnes.

2. Miljenko Turniski, Delegate LDA Osijek, new Representative of the Consultative Committee in the ALDA Governing Board

Miljenko Turniski has been appointed the new representative of the LDA delegates in the ALDA Governing Board. He is currently working as a delegate for the Local Democracy Agency in Osijek, Croatia.

His involvement in the Association of Local Democracy Agencies started in 1997, when he became an assistant at the LDA in Osijek, the town of which he has a profound knowledge, having spent his childhood there. Miljenko, who has a degree in Political Sciences, took over his present position in the year 2000. Before working for the LDA in Osijek, he was employed as a sales promoter by various companies in Croatia. With his broad first-hand experience in the region, which was highly affected by the war in Croatia at the beginning of the 1990s, Miljenko is a very competent person to make ALDA's work more known in the Balkans. He has initiated various projects so far, including local government training; transborder co-operation in the Danube Euroregion and the protection of public interest on a local level. This experience will undoubtedly also enrich ALDA's Governing Board in the future.

3. First Governing Board ALDA, hosted by East Staffordshire Borough Council, 6th of February 2004

The first ALDA Governing Board in 2004 was held in Burton on Trent (UK) on 6 February 2004. The host this time was ALDA's partner organisation, the East Staffordshire Borough Council. Besides the usual presentation of ALDA's current activities and the approval of the provisional budget for 2004, specific programmes were presented and discussed, including the pilot project in Georgia, the proposal for an LDA in Albania, a request from Armenia and the announcement of a new delegate in Prijedor.

For the first time, the new representative of the LDA delegates, Miljenko Turniski, took part in the Governing Board. Mr. Turniski is working as a delegate for the Local Democracy Agency in Osijek, Croatia, at present.

4. EU Enlargement as an Opportunity for Municipal Development – the EU Mayors Programme



On 1 May 2004 the European Union underwent an incomparable transformation: with a “big bang” it grew to become a union of 25 member states. This “reunification of Europe” has long been awaited for and will undoubtedly bring more stability and economic growth to its members. However, despite these numerous benefits, it will also entail many challenges – in particular for the people living in both the old and new Europe.

The Association of Local Democracy Agencies (ALDA) therefore developed the year-long EU Mayors programme which seeks to make the people living in these countries more aware of the advantages and defiances of EU enlargement. The project which is sponsored and supported by the EU Programme Prince and the Council of Europe’s Congress of Local and Regional Authorities intends to build a Europe from below, so that EU enlargement does not only remain an idea of the political elites, but also includes the active participation of all sorts of different groups of society in it.

To achieve this goal, ALDA is organising four seminars on different local democracy policies for the core partners of the EU Mayors programme – local representatives from France, UK, Ireland, Italy, Poland and Lithuania. The topics to be discussed include relations with citizens, public utilities, environmental issues and decision-making processes at local level. These seminars give the participants the opportunity to exchange best practices and to learn from each other.

With these exchanges ALDA would like to avoid the mistake that Germany made after its own reunification in 1990: to impose one system upon another without giving a voice to the other side. And there were many positive aspects that were lost when East Germany became part of the Federal Republic of Germany. Better childcare facilities from the communist system are only one of many examples on the local level...

Thus, it is beyond doubt that we can learn many things from our partners in Eastern Europe and by sharing these experiences, both sides can improve their current practices. Sharing experiences will also help us to grow together, reduce stereotypes and to develop a common European identity.

So far, one launching conference in Strasbourg last December as well as two seminars have taken place, namely the seminar “Improving the relations with citizens as an added value for the local authorities” in Suresnes, France, from 9 – 12 March 2004 and the seminar “Public services – an opportunity for local democracy” in Reggio Emilia, Italy, from 5 – 7 April 2004. These three events were a first step in the building of a European network of expertise on local democracy policies which will continue to grow until the official end of the EU Mayors Project in December 2004 and hopefully far beyond it. Cf. the ALDA Agenda 2004 for the upcoming EU Mayors events.

At first sight, it may seem unusual for ALDA to be involved in a project on EU enlargement, since the organisation has so far primarily gained expertise in promoting local democracy and human rights in war-ravaged municipalities of the countries of the Former Yugoslavia. Ten Local Democracy Agencies are currently working in the Western Balkans, organising various projects to strengthen civil society.

The EU Mayors project gives ALDA the opportunity to use its experience from the Balkans for other areas in Europe. Moreover, an enlarged Europe does not end at the Slovenian-Austrian border. Together with Romania and Bulgaria the Balkan states will now form the new EU neighbouring countries. They wish to foster trans-border cooperation and finally become EU member states themselves. The European Council in Thessaloniki last June stressed that Europe should not have a "black spot" in the Balkans and hence opened a door to the countries of the Former Yugoslavia to apply for EU membership in the near future.

Thus, looking already beyond the 2004 EU enlargement, ALDA wishes to build up a European network of local democracy experts not only from East to West, but also from North to South.

More information on the EU Mayors Programme and the first results of the exchange of best practices can be found on the following website:

http://www.ldaonline.org/12-EUmayors/index_EUmayors.htm

Dorothee Fischer, Press Officer and Joint Project Manager ALDA, Strasbourg

5. Visit of the ALDA Director to the EU Mayors' Partners in Lithuania 18th to the 21st of February 2004

The Municipal Training Centre of Kaunas - second largest city in Lithuania - has been member of the Association of the LDAs since 2003. They are also active partners of the EU Mayors programme and they took part in the launching conference in Strasbourg, in December 2003 and we will take part in the exchanges of best practices throughout 2004. In order to present the activities of the Association of the LDAs and its Agencies and to plan future co-operation, the Director of ALDA, Ms. Antonella Valmorbida, visited the Municipal Training Centre from the 18th to the 21st of February 2004. The mission was also organised to coincide with the meeting of 40 city managers of Lithuania (out of 60 municipalities existing in the whole country). The two-days event was held in the summer and health resort of Birštonas. Ms. Valmorbida presented the activities and the opportunities for local authorities of Lithuania to be involved in : a) exchanges of best practices and problem-solving in local government issues b) networking with EU local authorities c) funding opportunities. The meeting was also useful for the selection of the candidates from the local authorities to attend the different EU Mayors events. The working groups identified the best case studies to be presented in the seminars in the EU.

6. Message from Association of the LDAs on the Bomb Attacks in Madrid and the Recent Upheavals in Kosovo and Serbia

The Association of the LDAs and its network are looking at the recent events in Europe (starting with the bomb attacks in Madrid and the upheavals in Kosovo and Serbia) with a growing concern. It seems that at some stage the time for dialogue stopped in the mind and the action of many people. We confirm that we are all strongly opposed to ending the peaceful processes and we will do anything to restore the dialogue. All of us have witnessed many times that once the fire has extinguished lives and voices, there is no way back for anyone. Our experience is that building peace and confidence is a long process, but it is nothing compared to the length of healing broken lives and families and recovering from wars. We all confirm also that peace must be built and must follow consistent steps and this is a responsibility of single citizens and leaders.

For more information on the recent upheavals in Kosovo, please contact directly our LDAs:

ldakosovo@aldaintranet.org (LDA Gjilane, Kosovo, Delegate Steve Duchenes)

ldacss@aldaintranet.org (LDA Central and Southern Serbia, Delegate Emiliano Bertoldi)

7. The Association of LDAs attended the 7th Steering Committee of the Programme "Working Together"

On 20 March 2004, ALDA staff attended the Steering Committee of the programme "Working Together" in Bucharest, Romania. Since 1996, the network of LDAs is present in this regional programme and can benefit of Training of Trainers offers and contacts with other training agencies for local government and NGOs. The Romanian organisation Partners for Local Development Foundation (FPDL) co-ordinates the network and 70 representatives attended the event. The Romanian NGO is also member of the programme "Actions for capacity building of local authorities and civil society in Southern and Eastern Europe" sponsored by ANCI, the Italian Association of Municipalities, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs which will be implemented in the next 3 years.

The Association of LDAs was present with its Director Antonella Valmorbida and the staff, Martial Paris, Dorothee Fischer and Stefania Toriello.

It was again an excellent occasion to discuss and to develop new objectives in terms of training offers. A special focus was given to the fight against corruption in the cities. An outstanding presentation of a specific case was given by the former Mayor of La Paz, Ronald Maclean-Abaroa, now consultant of the World Bank Institute in Washington.

For any contact, consult also the website: www.fpd.ro

8. ALDA Fact-Finding Mission in Georgia

A delegation of the Association of the Local Democracy Agencies went to Georgia for a fact-finding mission from 27 February to 2 March 2004. The delegation was composed of Mrs Antonella Valmorbida, Director ALDA, Mr Per Vinther, member of the Governing Board and Mr Martial Paris, the Director's Assistant.

The objectives of the mission were to establish a first contact with possible local partners in the country, to get a first understanding of the situation and to draft a report that will be the basis for the following mission in September. The delegation met different local NGOs in Tbilisi and the latter showed their interest in a future collaboration with ALDA.

In addition, the delegation went to Kutaisi (250km from Tbilisi) for a meeting with the Kutaisi Newport Association. After a friendly welcome and a useful meeting, the Governor of the Imreti Region received the delegation and showed a big interest in the implementation of a new Local Democracy Agency in Kutaisi.

The delegation also met the chief of the Urban Institute and the French Ambassador to Georgia. The mission concluded that the NGO sector is strong and reliable in Georgia. The future LDA should be based on a strong and active partnership and work together with the Council of Europe on its action in the region. The next step of the process is a longer mission with the possible partners in September 2004. On the basis of that mission report ALDA will submit a draft proposal for the opening of an LDA in Georgia.

9. Successful Networking at Civitas Non-Profit Fair

The Association of Local Democracy Agencies participated for the first time in the non-profit fair Civitas in Padova, Italy, from 30 April – 2 May. The fair, titled “The Europe of Municipalities, of local authorities and of social networks”, provided a unique opportunity to the Association to promote their democracy-building in the Balkans and the rest of Europe. Moreover, ALDA used the event to network with the other 340 NGOs and local authorities present at the fair.

The 60m² stand included information about current projects including a new cooperation with ANCI, the Italian Association of Municipalities, which will be financed by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Representatives from the Local Democracy Agencies in the Balkans, as well as partners from Lithuania and Mogliano Veneto, Italy, had come to Civitas to present their work and to answer questions from the public. On the 1 May, ALDA celebrated the day of the enlargement of the European Union with the partners at the stand.

The fair counted more than 40,000 visitors and was accompanied by several conferences with speakers from international organisations, NGOs and local authorities from across Europe.

10. Starting supporting programme for partnership for the LDA (budget line CPLRE)

The Association of the Local Democracy Agencies was confirmed the contribution of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities to support partnership for the LDAs. The programme includes some functioning costs of the Association and the support to programmes of the Agencies for 2004. The total funding is 100.000 Euro in 2004. The contribution in kind offered by the Congress is the support of two full time liaison officers and a secretary, plus the offices and the services in Strasbourg during the events organised at the Congress.

11. Presentation of the assessment on the situation of sustainable development and protection of environment (supported by Geneva) for 11 LDAs (including Mostar)

The programme “Sustainable development and protection of environment” supported by the Canton of Geneva and with the cooperation of FEDRE started with a full assessment on the situation of environment (in particular water management and waste disposal) in all the regions where the LDAs are based. The assessment gave also the necessary indications for the training needs. The 40 pages documents was presented to the Canton of Geneva, which is now organising the participation of experts in five training in the Balkans to be realised by 2005.

The assessment is available upon request.

12. Launch of the programme “Capacity Building for local Government and civil society in SEE”, supported by MFA Italy in co-operation with ANCI (association of Italian towns) and the programme “Italian cities for the cities of the Balkans”

On the 4th of November 2003, two conventions with ANCI (Association of Italian Towns) were signed for the implementation of “Capacity building for local authorities and NGOs in South Easter Europe” and “The Italian cities for the cities of the Balkans”. Those two programmes started the implementation with the support of the funding Law 84/2001 “Reconstruction of the Balkans” supported by the Ministry of

Foreign Affairs of Italy. The funding for those two programmes managed by the ALDA is for 3 years 1.700.000 Euros.

It includes a set of training of trainers and training for all the LDAs (to be delivered to local governments and NGOs) the support of youth info centre, participatory planning process activities and case studies and exchanges for youth. The programme "Italian Cities for Cities of the Balkans" will include the identification of possible programmes to support public services in the Balkans, in cooperation with Italian towns.

After the preparation of the programme, the steering committee will be held in Strasbourg, the 26th of May 2004.

13. Approval and start up of the programme "Including civil society into the decision making process at the local level as a common value in Europe", supported by DG Education and Culture, European Union, planned conference Barcelona, 1st and 2nd of July 2004

The city of Barcelona and the Association of LDAs presented to the DG Education and Culture a programme for inquiring and debating on the European value of civil participation into the decision making process at the local level. The initiative was granted with and it will take place in Barcelona, the 1st and 2nd of July 2004, together with the General Assembly of the Association. The conference will be prepared by an inquiry to be distributed among the large network of the ALDA. The info can be collected on our website.

14. Approved programme by Norway for the LDA network, Local economic development and entrepreneurship- to be started second half of 2004

Norway is chairing the Council of Europe in the second part of 2004. The contacts between Norwegian Local authorities and the ALDA and intense and very productive. Many of them as supporting LDAs in South East Europe (in particular in Serbia) and they are member of the Association. In this perspective, after two meetings in Oslo where the programme was assessed together with Mr. Ian Braathu, of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs from Norway, it was agreed to sponsor a programme on local economic development and entrepreneurship with youth, giving a follow up to the priorities addressed by the brainstorming session of the Delegates, held in Tivat in summer 2003.

The programme should be launched in the second part of 2004.

15. Meeting of Italian partners in Cremona, 5th of March 2004

The network of Italian partners and supporters of the LDA programme met in Cremona on the 5th of March 2004 to discuss the priorities, opportunities and difficulties of the programme. It was highlighted the need of defining the target and the mandate of the Agencies, a fundamental step for focusing the actions in the future.

16. Successful negotiations for the second phase of the programme supported by Irish Aid in Montenegro, Kosovo and Serbia.

With the support of the Council of Europe, the three LDAs (Montenegro, Central and Southern Serbia and Kosovo) were funded for their programme until the end of 2004 by Irish Aid. The programmes are focusing on transborder co-operation, local authorities capacity building, NGOs, Youth and environment.

Those are the follow up of a three years programme that gave the LDA programme the opportunity to set up those Agencies in the last few years.

17. Translation of most of the material of the ALDA into local languages of the Balkans, soon on our website

Most of the documents of the Association of the LDAs are still in English and in French, with some of them in Italian. LGI Budapest, in its funding 2004, sponsored the translation into Croatian, Serbian, Bosnian and Albanian. Those documents will be soon available on the website of the Association,

18. Conclusion of the programme," Development of Democratic Citizenship and responsive leadership at the local level in BiH and S&M", supported by the Council of Europe

The LDAs of Prijedor, Zavidovici, Subotica, Central and Southern Serbia and Montenegro implemented a full inquiry with samples of local authorities on development of democratic citizenship. The programme was supported by the Council of Europe by the Directorate of Legal Affairs, cooperation for local and regional democracy.

LDA Activities

1. Cooperation between LDAs and the Integrated Project "Responses to Violence in Everyday Life in a Democratic Society"

Following the topics and conclusions of the seminar "Responses to Violence in Everyday Life in South-East Europe" held in Ljubljana (Slovenia) on 24 and 25 September 2003, the Local Democracy Agencies have proposed an "Integrated project - RESPONSES TO VIOLENCE IN EVERYDAY LIFE IN A DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY" to the Council of Europe.

All the LDAs were created as, among other reasons, a response to violence in the former Yugoslavia. Thus, the LDAs in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro and in Kosovo are working daily on the causes and consequences of violence. The projects always involve civil society and local authorities to whom are introduced and with whom are developed different measures in order to build a democratic society. The emphasis of the projects has been put on decentralised cooperation, confidence-building and cross-border cooperation.

During the seminar in Ljubljana, the guide for local authorities "Urban Crime Prevention" was presented to the participants. The guide is a good starting point for public discussions and for local authorities who have not developed a practice on crime prevention yet. Since the guide has not been translated into the local languages of the LDAs, the LDA participants agreed to disseminate it in their area during seminars and round tables. The information about the translated guide will be made available on the ALDA web

site, so it can be distributed to other interested local authorities. After an assessment of needs, the LDAs could also try to organise a conference on the issue. The manual will be disseminated also to young political leaders, during ad hoc meetings with the local authorities and public debates involving local authorities, NGOs and citizens to present and discuss it. Some Agencies plan to contact the local media (TV's and Newspapers) for its presentation to the wider public.

In most cases, the LDAs will be the first to give an opportunity to the public to discuss the issues of urban crime and its prevention.

Tatjana Puškaric, LDA Sisak

2. Assessment Report on "Sustainable Development and Protection of Environment in South-Eastern Europe" Published

The programme "Sustainable development and protection of environment in South-Eastern Europe", which is supported by the Canton of Geneva, Switzerland, aimed at assessing the situation of waste management and protection of the environment in the areas of the Local Democracy Agencies (LDAs) in the Balkans. Different methods such as interviews, analysis, documentation and statistics were used for the data collection. Each LDA came up with a separate document to evaluate the situation in its area, including analysis of the problem, the resources available, the solutions found so far, the roles of local authorities in this issue and the level of management used. The LDAs also assessed in how far the current environmental practices comply with European standards and what national laws and policies exist in these areas so far. Moreover, the role of the Local Democracy Agencies and other actors of civil society were analysed.

The report summarises the most important results of the assessments and is available for download on the ALDA website: www.ldaaonline.org. This exchange of practices provides a basis for future LDA activities in the field of environment.

3. LDA Sisak Project: "Promoting Effective Local Level Democracy in Croatia", European Commission CARDS Stabilisation Programme

January 2004-January 2005

The Local Democracy Agency Sisak in partnership with the International Rescue Committee (IRC) and the Serbian Democratic Forum (SDF) implemented the project "Promoting Effective Local Level Democracy in Croatia" in Petrinja, Sunja, Daruvar and Sirac municipalities. The duration of the project is 12 months. It aims at strengthening dialogue between citizens and local government; promoting local government transparency and accountability and building citizen capacity to advocate for and address local needs.

The Local Democracy Agency Sisak is in particular responsible for the organisation of trainings for local government representatives in order to extend transparency, equality and efficiency of grant-awarding modules for local organisations. In addition, the LDA Sisak is responsible for organising educational excursions for representatives of local government and non-government organisations to towns/municipalities which are using transparent grant-awarding modules. They also deal with the evaluation of existing grant-awarding modules and their improvements as well as with Mayor-to-Mayor meetings and cross-border Mayor-to-Mayor meetings, in order to stimulate interregional and international co-operation. At the same time, meetings between representatives of local government and

citizens are coordinated, in order to improve communication and to inform local government about activities and problems of civil society.

4. The Second Partners' Meeting for LDA Subotica in Brussels

The Second Partners' Meeting for the LDA Subotica was held in Brussels (West Midlands Office in EU) on Thursday, 26th February on the initiative of Mr. Roger Lawrence, the Wolverhampton City Councillor. Present were Mrs. Antonella Valmorbidia, Director of ALDA, Mr. Per Vinther, member of the Governing Board, Mr. Bjarne Stabak from Buskerud County Council (Norway), Mr. Roger Lawrence and Esther Knight from the Wolverhampton City Council, Mr Geza Kucera the mayor of Subotica, Imre Kern, deputy member of CLRAE from Subotica and Stanka Parac, Delegate of LDA Subotica. Apart from the presentation of main objectives to establish a new partnership within the ALDA, the priorities and some potential forms of future co-operation were addressed which aim at strengthening local capacities and democratic participation with regard to multicultural and multiethnic local environment of a municipality in the proximity of EU borders. Particular emphasis was laid on the objectives set out during the General Assembly of ALDA held in Subotica in July 2003 and the LDAs 10th Anniversary Celebrations. Furthermore, other issues were discussed such as the support given to accelerating the EU integration process and the role of local and regional authorities in South Eastern Europe.

Following the adoption of the mid-term plan of activities of the LDA Subotica, the Wolverhampton City Council took up the role of the Lead Partner and in this way confirmed its interest to maintain and further develop active participation in the ALDA network.

Stanka Parac, Delegate of LDA Subotica

5. LDA staff got trained in communication skills

A training of trainers (TOT) organised by the Association of Local Democracy Agencies in Osijek, Croatia, from 24 - 27 March 2004 taught LDA staff, members of their host cities and their lead partners how to improve their communication skills. Four experts of both internal and external communications had been invited as trainers, namely the Italian journalist and communication scientist Francesco Jori; Dragan Bisenic, journalist from Belgrade; Cathie Burton, press officer at the Council of Europe; and Dennis Kelly, Director of the Centre for Public Relations Studies at Leeds Business School. The methodology consisted of short introductory lectures, but most of all of practical work: the participants became journalists for a day and practised to be press officers of their organisations. The last session was devoted to the improvement of the internal communication between the Local Democracy Agencies themselves and between ALDA and the LDAs. The TOT, which was sponsored by the Local Government and Public Service Reform Initiative LGI in Budapest, will be followed by various activities in the Local Democracy Agencies throughout 2004. The LDA staff as multipliers will train people from their municipalities in communication skills.

6. The partner of the LDA Central and Southern Serbia, the city of Reggio Emilia, is now officially twinned with the city of Kragujevac in Serbia

The partner of the LDA Central and Southern Serbia, the city of Reggio Emilia, is now officially twinned with the city of Kragujevac in Serbia. The first visit of the Italian delegation to Serbia was held in February and on the 30th of March, the documents were signed in Italy at the presence of the Mayor of Reggio Emilia, Ms. Antonella Spaggiari, and the Deputy Mayor of Kragujevac, Mr. Dobrica Milovanovic.

This is an important step that confirms the high level of co-operation of those two cities in the field of education, local economic development, the promotion of social welfare and solidarity actions.

7. The closure of the LDA Sisak project: "The exchange of best practices and the support to the development of the Nature Park Lonjsko Polje"

The project "The exchange of best practices and the support to the development of the Nature park Lonjsko polje", that was sponsored by the Veneto Region, Italy and implemented in cooperation with partner local authorities and institutions from Italy and Croatia was concluded during a seminar in Porto Viro, Italy on 17 and 18 April 2004. This meeting gathered representatives from the Veneto Region, City of Mogliano Veneto (project coordinators), City of Porto Viro, City of Sisak, the Architecture Faculty of the University of Venice, Nature Park Lonjsko polje and the Local Democracy Agency Sisak.

During the meeting the main results achieved in the 18 months long period of the project were presented, among them the following activities:

- The introductory seminar held in Sisak in October 2002: "The exchange of experiences and best practices: Nature Park Lonjsko polje - Regional nature park of the Po' river delta".
- The group of students and professors from the Architecture Faculty of the University of Venice (IUAV) developed a restoration and reconstruction study of the traditional wooden house (no.27) in the village of Cigoc inside the Nature Park Lonjsko Polje. The results of the study were presented during the meeting in Porto Viro. Special emphasis was laid on the preservation of the tradition and cultural heritage.
- The Local Democracy Agency Sisak translated the promotional material of the Nature Park Lonjski Polje into Italian. The master plan was printed as well as the guide through Cigoc and the leaflet "Nature park Lonjsko polje". At the same time, the LDA translated the web pages into Italian: www.pp-lonjsko-polje.hr (the official site of the Nature park Lonjsko polje) and www.cigoc.hr (the web site of the Touristic Society Cigoc)

Through the mentioned activities the Nature Park Lonjsko polje could be promoted and its reconstruction and the protection of the traditional architecture could be supported. In addition, the promotion of eco-tourism in Lonjsko Polje was started through the dissemination of the promotional material in Italian partner cities and their agencies.

All the representatives at the seminar in Porto Viro expressed their will to continue the project and plan further activities such as the actual conservation and reconstruction, the creation of a handbook on the restoration of wooden houses, an exhibition about the two nature parks - Lonjsko polje and the Delta of the river Po' that will be organised in all partner cities of the project.

8. Potential Partners Meeting for the future LDA in Mostar

"Since I realised the importance of that meeting, I will stay here until its end" said the Mayor of the city of Mostar, Mr Jahic. This sentence highlights the strong involvement of the local authorities. ALDA organised a meeting of potential partners for the future LDA in the divided city of Mostar on the 16th of April.

All the potential partners were invited: the city of Montegrotto Terme, Puglia Region, Tuscany Region from Italy; the city of Zaragoza from Spain; the city of Velje from Denmark; the city of Kayseri from Turkey; the city of Kragujevac from Serbia-Montenegro and local NGOs. The objectives of the meeting were to assess the interest of the possible partners and the local authorities. The positive outcome of

this gathering was a confirmation to the ALDA in the process of setting up the LDA in this city. A precise schedule was fixed and the activities will start as soon as possible.

The Director of ALDA, Mrs Antonella Valmorbida, expressed her positive feeling and her optimism for the future work that the LDA will implement.

9. 4th Anniversary of the Local Democracy Agency of Prijedor (BiH)

The LDA of Prijedor (Bosnia and Herzegovina) celebrated its 4th anniversary on the 17th of April in Prijedor. 250 guests attended the event. In the morning all the representatives of the different partners of the LDA (local authorities, NGOs, Youth, Minorities, former refugees...) had the opportunity to make a short presentation of their cooperation. It was a large overview of the previous and present projects in which the LDA is involved.

Michele Nardelli, president of the Observatory on the Balkans, proposed that the LDA and the city could organise symbolic European elections like the EU members to show that they share the common European values.

After a cocktail, an open round table was organised which gathered the international and local partners of the LDA. They will represent a kind of a council which aim will be to define the strategy of the LDA's activities for the future. The festivities ended with a play.

10. Partner meeting LDA Ohrid, in Kardica, 21st of April 2004

The city of Karditsa organised, together with the LDA Ohrid a meeting of the partners. In particular, the meeting allowed the presentation of the ALDA activities and the LDA Ohrid to the association of the cities of the province of Karditsa, which agreed to become member of the Association. Unfortunately, the delegation from Ohrid could not come for a problem with the visas at the very last minute. They are supposed to go to Greece further on for agreeing on future co-operation. The programme was organised by ANKA Karditsa, member of the Governing Board of the Association and leader of the LDA Ohrid. The meeting was attended by the Director of ALDA, Antonella Valmorbida, and by Aishling Lyon, new staff member of LGIB, working in particular in SEE.

11. Partner meeting LDA Central and Southern Serbia in Suresnes, Emiliano Bertoldi Delegate and Suresnes (France) Partner leader

After many months of stand by, the situation of the LDA Central and Southern Serbia was eventually solved by the appointment of the new Delegate, with the approval of all the partners of the LDA. This is Mr. Emiliano Bertoldi. His first task will be to work on the programmes and financial situation of the LDA. Mr. Ger Deering, representative of Carlow County, Ireland, resigned from his position of leader of the LDA. The LDA has a new leader, the city of Suresnes (France) represented by Mr. Jean Louis Testud.

12. New Delegate in LDA Montenegro, Kerim Medjedovic

Through a fully transparent recruitment process, in March 2004, was appointed the new Delegate of the LDA Montenegro, Mr. Kerim Medjedovic. The Delegate was selected after a selection at the national level, a shortlist and a full day of testing and interviews. The selecting team included the leader, Keith

Jones (East Staffordshire Borough Council), the representative of the Council of Europe in Podgorica, Mr. Ristovski, the director of ALDA, Antonella Valmorbida and the the deputy Mayor of Niksic.

13. New Delegate in LDA Zavidovici, Simonetta Donsante

After many years of activities, Mr. Andrea Rossini resigned from his position of Delegate of the LDA Zavidovici. The newly appointed delegate is Simonetta Donsante, who has been working in Bosnia, with the LDA for a few months already.

14. Training for Delegates in Zavidovici – 1st meeting for the Local Development programme, Supported by France, 19th-21st of April 2004

The serie of five training of trainers included in the programme supported by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs took place in Zavidovici, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and was attended by all the LDAs representative. The senior trainers were Mrs. Geneviève Salaun et Mr. René CASPAR.

The first training put the basis for the work between the session that will include the first functioning of the working group in each LDA. The second session will be in Rozaje in Montenegro, in June 2004.

Partners

Lithuania enters the European Union

On the 1st of May 2004, Lithuania together with nine other countries joined the European Union. This extraordinary historic event brings different feelings to the people living in my country.

Official public opinion polls show that 78%¹ of Lithuanians are for Lithuania's membership in the EU, and the number is gradually increasing. The high number shows a strong will and readiness of the people to face the challenges, which are awaiting us in less than two months. Yet at the same, even the greatest supporters of the membership have mixed feelings about the effect this long-awaited political event will bring to the lives of each of us.

On the eve of this historic moment, I invited a large group of my friends representing different categories of age, education, position and life experiences to share our expectations and fears towards the changes that the new system brings. Here are the generalized results of my informal "research", which I hope will provide some illustration of the moods that are being felt on this side of the EU border two months before it moves away...

Most of my discussants pointed out the following expectations – positive sides of our country's accession to the European Union:

New and wider opportunities for everyone will open in every sphere of life. More possibilities to travel, to see other European countries, to learn life-styles, cultures, history, people, to get new ideas and inspirations will be available. People who have children were happy about their possibilities to study abroad, be active part of the global processes, to be independent and cosmopolitan people.

¹ The European Committee under the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, 2003

Everyone related the accession with the transfer of a higher quality of life. We believe that all reforms that our country has been undergoing since the regaining of independence a decade ago, will help us to improve our lives in many ways.

Friends owning businesses or working in the business sector pointed out a stimulus for a higher quality of work, for constant reach for perfection. Possibilities to enter new markets are a great challenge, too.

From a more practical side, they are happy that customs procedures and tax system will be significantly simplified, which will save time and other resources. Possibility to apply to EU financial support programmes, inflow of investment to the economy of the country are very important positive aspects as well. We all hope that the new systems will eliminate the corruption from all areas of our public life.

Among other key expectations, a common reach for “belonging to the “normal people” was emphasised. Having a passport of EU member state and belonging to the family of the Europeans (not its eastern, northern, southern or any other corner) gives a great feeling of self-respect. The sense of equality means a higher confidence in ourselves, in our ideas and skills.

Different fears from the new era were discussed as well. Most of them are related to economic matters:

The employers are concerned about the need to raise salaries of employees; otherwise they would risk losing their best staff members or their clients. Quality requirements for production and services will be much higher, which in turn will require serious investment in technologies, management systems, greater investment etc. Property prices will increase, and it will be very difficult for Lithuanians to compete with wealthy western investors. Inflow of illegal migrants (cheap labour) from neighbour countries will increase. Many high-skilled professionals will leave Lithuania for other countries as companies there will be able to offer more attractive working conditions.

Competition in all spheres of life will be much tighter, which by Lithuanians - my friends, who participated in my recent session of interviews - is perceived both as a positive and a negative thing.

I wish that more people from the “old” European Union will find a greater interest in the acceding countries. We have a lot to give and to share with you – not to take away from you. I hope this learning process will be like a busy two-way street!

Jolita Piliutyte
Municipal Training Centre Kaunas, Lithuania

Miscellaneous

European Policy Centre Conference: “Transforming the Western Balkans” - Regional Co-operation: no future without it?

In the past decade many politicians in the Western Balkans, or as some prefer, South East Europe, used to develop red spots when regional co-operation was being advocated by the International Community. Not so any more if one can believe statements made by the BiH Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mladen Ivanic, and the Croatian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Miomir Žužul, at a well-attended Conference on 23 January in Brussels, organized by the European Policy Centre and the King Baudouin Foundation. The title of the Conference was “Transforming the Western Balkans” and the impression conveyed by the panel, which apart from the above mentioned MFAs consisted of Principal Deputy High Representative, Donald Hays, Special Adviser to the ICTY Chief Prosecutor, Jean-Daniel Ruch, Balkans Programme Director of the ICG, Nicholas Whyte, and Director for the Western Balkans, Council of the EU, Stefan Lehne, was indeed that progress is being made. However, the not unexpected upbeat assessment of the situation in their respective countries and of growing mutual co-operation by

the two ministers was met with a somewhat guarded optimism by the other panel members. Minister Žužul stressed the new Croatian government's commitment to stay on course towards EU and NATO, even wishing to increase the speed, accepting that conditions had to be fulfilled, incl. co-operation with ICTY, but disinclined to be relegated to eternal observation status. He stressed the Euro-enthusiasm among the Croatian population and saw eventual Croatian EU and NATO membership as a good example for the entire region. He praised the good relationship Croatia was developing with BiH and Serbia and Montenegro but expressed concern that there did not seem to exist a clear vision in Serbia of where the country was headed.

Minister Ivanić insisted that BiH had survived and would survive. A lot of progress had been made but obviously many challenges remained. Greater political stability and a basis for economic growth had been achieved and reforms would continue. He confirmed the emergence of good relations and ease of communication with neighbours Croatia and SCG, which he saw as of equal importance to BiH, but he also expressed concern at the perpetual instability in Serbia, including in Kosovo. Ambassador Hays noted that increased communication across ethnic divides could be observed in BiH, however, the obvious commonality of interests and concerns was contrasted by the fact that too many still live in the past. The citizenry would clearly like to see reforms move faster.

Director Lehne observed that dramatic progress had been made in the region against the backdrop of the EU Stabilisation and Association Process, but regretted that expectations about advancing to the next step in the process grew much faster than the pace of reform. The EU was indeed finding itself in a situation where it would need to take more responsibility in the area, incl. political and military, as US and NATO attention was turning elsewhere. The situation in Kosovo he saw as the main threat to stability and, stressing the need for commitment to democracy, expressed the hope that democratic forces in Serbia would get their act together. In response to an observation that the recent elections in Serbia had indeed been democratic he did specify that the main concern was instability of democratic institutions and the need for a credible partner for the International Community.

Mr Rush focused on the organized crime and the war criminals still at large in the former Yugoslavia. He felt convinced that bringing war criminals to justice could help increase stability as well as help combat organized crime. The road map for ICTY was to get high-level war criminals tried in The Hague and middle- and lower-level war criminals prosecuted in national courts. The latter would help reconciliation and wider acceptance in the region that war crimes were committed. He mentioned that there would be no new ICTY indictments after the end of 2004 and that ICTY should complete its mandate by 2010, but regretted that the transfer of the main perpetrators to The Hague was not happening. Mr Whyte maintained the International Crisis Group line that uncertainty about Kosovo should end and that the International Community must concentrate on this. He observed that countries where an EU Special Envoy is present (BiH and FYROM) had made substantial progress and advocated that posting EU Special Envoys to Serbia and Albania was likely to greatly speed up reforms in those two countries. He praised the International Community for insisting on conditions.

The audience quizzed the panel on a wide range of related issues, incl. obstacles to Foreign Direct Investment in the countries of the region, such as red tape and high taxation; whether international presence and guardianship was aiding or hindering the democratisation process; and whether EU membership should not wait until the countries had solved their internal problems.

In my opinion the conference leads to at least two conclusions of relevance for the LDAs: Firstly, that if regional co-operation in South East Europe is no longer taboo at the national level then it should become easier for the LDAs to promote cross-border co-operation at the local and municipal level or indeed between LDAs in different countries.

Secondly, in view of the growing questioning of the justification of international presence and guardianship (re the discussion provoked by the European Stability Initiative last year) the LDA network may pride itself at being based on mutually beneficial partnership and broad local ownership of its programme.

For further information on the EPC, consult the following website: www.theepc.be

Contacts established

- contact with the **Observatory for the Balkans**
- Cooperation with the network **NALAs**, Presence of ALDA in Budva, 6th of April 2004
- Organisation “tour” in the Balkans for the donors
- Info on “responsible tourism” promoted by Tavolo Trentino for Serbia
- Follow up contact for possible activities in Tuzla.
- Contact with city of Kaunas (Lithuania) for membership ALDA
- Presentation ALDA in University of Padova, 10th of May 2004, 22nd of April 2004
- Presentation Dorothee Fischer at the meeting of the Cités Unies France, Paris for the French local authorities involved in SEE, 14th of May
- Presentation of Ms. Stefania Toriello, Gorizia, 14th of May, project for the cities of Water in the Balkans
- Interest for membership ALDA . City of Kragujevac, city of Nis (Serbia and Montenegro), city of Locri (Italy)
- Organisation Balkan Day with LGIB (UK), preparatory meeting in Burton on Trent, 13th of May
- Contact with the fair of Local authorities in Italy (Compa) in Bologna, November 2004, together with Mogliano Veneto
- ALDA present in Rimini, 25th of March, programme for local authorities organised by AICCRE
- Contact with RP Armenia interested in an LDA
- ALDA present in the steering committee ALDA in Montalcino, 5th of March 2004.
- Associazione Campana della Pace, meeting in Rovereto for membership, 13th of April 2004
- Meeting in Modena for membership, 6th of May 2004
- Presentation ALDA at the Central European Network, Bratislava, 23rd of May 2004
- Meeting with citizens’ committee of the city of Rome, 2nd of April 2004
- Contact with Neuchatel and La Chaux de Fonds for a programme in Montenegro (and contact with the Swiss Agency for Development)

Agenda May – August 2004

May

25th of May 2004, Bureau of the ALDA, Strasbourg, Council of Europe

26 May Steering Committee of the programme “Actions for capacity building of local authorities and civil society in Southern and Eastern Europe Capacity Building” in co-operation with ANCI, the Italian Association of Municipalities and sponsored by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in Strasbourg, France,

28th of May, training session for the new LDA in Strasbourg, supported by the Congress

June

2nd of June, visit of Mr. Per Vinter (special guest ALDA governing Board) to EU Headquarter, Sarajevo, with Bosnian LDAs.

3rd of June, visit of Mr. Per Vinter (special guest ALDA governing Board) to EU Headquarter, Zagreb, with Croatian LDAs.

5 – 6 June LDA Kosovo present at the Salon de la Paix in Paris, France

21 – 23 June Seminar “Local Development in the Balkans” in Rozaje, Montenegro sponsored by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs

24 – 25 June EU Mayors Seminar “Sustainable Regions under Global Rules: Implementing UN environmental standards and EU practices locally” in Carlow, Ireland

30 June Governing Board in Barcelona, Spain

July

1 – 2 July Conference “Including civil society into the decision making process at the local level. A common value for local authorities in Europe”, sponsored by the DG Culture and Education of the European Commission, in Barcelona, Spain

2 July, General Assembly in Barcelona, Spain

2 July, Governing Board and appointment of the Bureau

15 – 17 July EU Mayors Seminar “Local decision-making...Lessons from an enlarged EU” in Birmingham, England

Last week of July, First Training of Trainers of the programme “Actions for capacity building of local authorities and civil society in Southern and Eastern Europe Capacity Building” (to be confirmed)

Programme for the second part of the year :

7th of October 2004 : Day for SEE, London, LGIB

Contact

Dorothee Fischer, Press Officer and Joint-Project Manager ALDA,

dothoe.fischer@aldaintranet.org

Tel.: 0033 3 90 21 45 93
