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15 December 2004

Newsletter 2004/III September – December 2004
Association of Local Democracy Agencies
Further news on ALDA's and the LDA's activities on www.ldaonline.org

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

Newsletter 2004/III September – December 2004 Published by the Association of Local Democracy Agencies

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ALDA Activities

1. ALDA present at conference on participation in policy-making in Brussels

"Participation in policy-making: criteria for the selection of civic NGOs" was the title of the conference organised by the Italian network of citizens' organisations, Active Citizenship Network (ACN), in Brussels on 16 and 17 September 2004. The conference brought together more than 100 European and Latin American representatives of civil society and international organisations which discussed how "horizontal subsidiarity", that is the collaboration between institutions and citizens' organisations, could be improved. One of the main dilemmas in this respect is that either no selection criteria for funding exist or these criteria bureaucratise the process and may disadvantage new or small organisations. The final results of the conference will be published in a report by the end of the year. Dorothee Fischer, press officer of the Association of Local Democracy Agencies, attended the event to make new contacts with NGOs all over Europe. One concrete result was the agreement between Ms. Fischer and the Active Citizenship Network to have articles on ALDA published on the ACN's website and newsletter. The ACN is currently comprised of a loose network of 70 members in 30 countries and is the European policy programme of the Italian movement Cittadinanzattiva, which has more than 76.000 members in 250 local assemblies.

2. EU Mayors partners learn from "Baltic Tiger"

That Lithuania is the fastest growing economy within the European Union this year and that its so-called "Dipolis"-project, a cooperation between its capital Vilnius and the second biggest city, Kaunas, have given the country the nickname "Baltic Tiger" is the main lesson learnt during the EU Mayors visit to Kaunas and Vilnius on the 21 and 22 September 2004. The aim of the visit organised by the Association of Local Democracy Agencies (ALDA) and the Municipal Training Centre in Kaunas was to show the ten representatives from local authorities in Poland, Italy and England how local democracy is organised in the new EU member states.

The programme included meetings with officials from the City Municipalities of Vilnius and Kaunas as well as a visit to the Municipal Training Centre and the Seimas, the Lithuanian Parliament. Moreover, the visitors were made familiar with Lithuanian culture and history through a visit to Trakai castle.

The visit completed the year-long EU Mayors project which aims at making local authorities in the old and new EU member states more aware of the benefits and challenges of EU enlargement. The result of the exchanges of best practices between the core partners from Lithuania, Poland, England, Ireland, Italy and France are available on ALDA's website: http://www.ldaaonline.org/12-EUmayors/index_EUmayors.htm and will be published on a CD-Rom at the end of the year.

3. World Urban Forum, Barcelona

A delegation of the Association of Local Democracy Agencies (ALDA) composed of Dobrica Milovanovic, ALDA Vice-President, Deputy Mayor of Kragujevac and Martial Paris, Assistant to the Director, attended the World Urban Forum organised by UN Habitat in Barcelona between the 13 and 17 of September 2004.

It gave the ALDA delegation the opportunity to take part in different conferences which topics are linked to the ongoing projects of the Association such as local economic development, participatory planning process, international trainings for local authorities and citizens' participation. The delegation made different contacts with various cities in France, international organisations (UNITAR, World Bank) and NGOs (Habitat Platform) for possible future collaborations.

4. ALDA Mission to Georgia

With the financial support from the Principality of Liechtenstein, the Association of Local Democracy Agencies organised a second field mission to Georgia from the 27 to the 3 October 2004. The aim of the mission were to understanding the local situation in a better way and to evaluate possibilities for a future Local Democracy Agency (LDA) in Georgia. In addition, the delegation consisting of Per Vinther, Vice-President ALDA, Martial Paris, Assistant to ALDA's Director as well as potential partners of this new LDA, namely Ms Piau, City of Nantes (F), Mr Beagle, LGIB (UK), Mr Tyson, Newport-Kutaisi Association (UK), Mr Mac Cusker, NI-CO (UK) as well as Mr Terrien from the Council of Europe, identified potential Georgian partners.

Therefore, a seminar on "Participation of civil society in the decision-making process" was organised in the city of Kutaisi, which gathered 50 participants from NGOs, local authorities and civil society

After having visited various cities in Georgia during this field mission (Batumi, Tbilisi, Kutaisi and Kashuri), the ALDA delegation agreed that the international partnership must be consolidated before any further steps will be taken.

The Bureau of ALDA expressed its preference for Kutaisi as a city host for the new LDA and set its goal to open the new Agency by summer 2005.

5. New Cooperation between Norwegian Government and ALDA

On the occasion of the Norwegian Presidency of the Council of Europe from May until November 2004, the Norwegian government is funding a project on youth and local economic development in the Balkans. The programme, "Promoting local economic development in Western Balkans: youth groups capacity building," is run by the Association of Local Democracy Agencies (ALDA) in cooperation with the Osservatorio dei Balcani, an Italian NGO active in the Balkans, and KS, the Norwegian Association of Towns and Regions.

The programme will contribute to the Stabilisation and Association Process that is preparing countries in the Balkans to join the European Union. The focus of the programme will be on combining local, sustainable economic development with youth empowerment, mainly through trans-border and city-to-city co-operation, training of trainers, and working groups. During a Steering Committee in Vicenza (Italy) on 16 November 2004, the main partners of the programme discussed the outline of activities for the year-long programme. The first activity consisted of a four-day seminar on EU Affairs for the delegates of the Local Democracy Agencies and ALDA staff taking place in Brussels between 27 November and 1 December 2004.

ALDA and the LDAs was also represented at the conference "Strengthening local democracy and democratic participation in a changing world" organised by the Norwegian chairmanship of the Council of Europe and the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (Oslo, 30 September - 1 October 2004). Ms. Stefania Toriello, project manager ALDA and Ms Tatjana Puskaric, Delegate of the

LDA in Sisak, Croatia, attended the conference. Ms Puskaric gave a presentation on "European networking as a tool of strengthening municipalities" and the experience of the ALDA/LDA-network in this field.

6. Breakfast Briefing held in cooperation with the European Policy Centre in Brussels

Delegates and staff from the 11 Local Democracy Agencies in Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina and the "former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" presented their work on the field during a breakfast briefing at the European Policy Centre (EPC), a Brussels-based think tank, to relevant NGOs and journalists on 1 December 2004.

The briefing finished off a four-day seminar on European Affairs which the Association of Local Democracy Agencies (ALDA) had organised in cooperation with the EPC's Training and Education Centre and with the financial support of the Norwegian Government. They had gathered a set of high-profile lecturers including Nicholas Whyte, International Crisis Group; David Daly and Joerg Volker Ketelsen, European Commission's DG External Relations and Jelena von Helldorff, King Baudouin Foundation among others. The first part of the training was dedicated to European issues in general such as the functioning of the different institutions, EU enlargement and the Constitution whereas the second part treated EU policy on South East Europe in further detail. The most interesting aspect for ALDA and LDA staff was that the European Union will remove this area of work from the DG External Relations and place it amongst the competencies of DG Enlargement. This underlines the growing proximity between the Balkans and the European Union, in particular with Croatia now having obtained candidate status and Macedonia hoping to do so in 2005.

Thus, European Policy will become growingly relevant for ALDA and the training contributed to making the EU jungle more accessible to ALDA and LDA staff.

7. EU Mayors visit to Poland: Local Democracy in the new EU member states

The Association of Local Democracy Agencies paid a visit to its Polish partners, the Foundation in support of Local Democracy/Training Center in Olsztyn, on the 20 and 21 October 2004, with the objective to discover how local democracy is organised in the new member states of the European Union. The visit was organised in the course of the year-long "EU Mayors" project which aimed at making local authorities in the old and new EU member states more aware of the benefits and challenges of EU enlargement.

The main destinations of the visit to Poland included the capital Warsaw and the city of Olsztyn in Masuria, where the participants coming from the six core partners of the programme, namely France, Italy, England, Ireland and Poland were given the opportunity to meet representatives of local authorities and non-governmental organisations. In addition, the visit gave the partners insight into typical Polish traditions and culture.

8. Commissioner Wallström to foster constructive dialogue with European local authorities

That the dialogue between local authorities and EU institutions must be improved is one of the main conclusions drawn from Brussels' conference "International Coordinators in Europe" in which ALDA's

press officer, Dorothee Fischer, participated. Almost 300 representatives from local authorities all over Europe were present at the event to discuss how to improve international cooperation in Europe. Among the keynote speakers were Gerhard Stahl, Secretary General of the Committee of the Regions; Jeremy Smith, Secretary General of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions and Margot Wallström, first Vice-President and Commissioner for Institutional Relations and Communication Strategy of the European Commission. "Local and regional authorities have gained a significant importance in the European Union in the last couple of years and I intend to engage with them in a constructive dialogue," Wallström stressed. Meetings with representatives from civil society and local authorities from all the EU member states are already on her agenda for 2005. Wallström also promised that she would fight EU bureaucracy in order to facilitate communication with the citizens and to speed up the internal decision-making processes of the European institutions.

ALDA was able to make many new contacts during the conference and hopes to strengthen its links with the new European Commission.

9. ALDA's Vice-President visited "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" and Kosovo

Between the 11th and 13th October, ALDA's Vice-President and former Head of the European Commission's Office in Croatia, Per Vinther, was on official visit to "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" and Kosovo. The objective of the visit was to present ALDA to EU delegations in those countries and to strengthen the ties between the Local Democracy Agencies, ALDA and the numerous international organisations which are based in the region still.

After a visit to the Local Democracy Agency in Ohrid ("Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia") and a meeting with a Delegation of the European Commission in Skopje, Mr. Vinther headed off to Gjilane (Kosovo), where the staff of the Local Democracy Agency had already prepared a full programme.

The first appointment took place in the premises of the United States Agency for International Development where Mr Vinther and the LDA staff could discuss the new "local government initiative" programme set up in six pilot-municipalities. The Local Democracy Agency of Kosovo, located in one of these municipalities, is thinking of coordinating its training activities aimed at local civil servants with this USAID project, which is currently assessing municipalities' needs.

They also met Mr Spahija, a governing board member of the Association of Kosovo Municipalities and the Mayor of Mitrovica / Mitrovicë, a city where Serb and Albanian communities are still widely divided and where several projects targeted at young people from both communities were implemented by the LDA Kosovo.

The visit continued with meetings with Mr. Rossin from the UNMIK Administration, followed by a visit to Ms Hajrullahu, acting head of Kosovar Prime Minister Office for European integration, with whom the LDA Kosovo would like to intensify its cooperation activities. Visits to the OSCE's Democratisation Department and the European Agency of Reconstruction finished off the three-day programme.

10. 5th Forum of Cities and Regions of South-East Europe Budva (Serbia-Montenegro)

An ALDA delegation composed of ALDA President, Mr. Martini, and Vice-President, Mr. Milovanovic, attended the 5th Forum of Cities and Regions of South East Europe in Budva, Serbia and Montenegro. Mr. Martini chaired the conference on "Current trends of partnerships with South-East local/regional

authorities and their impact on the socio-economic development". Mr. Milovanovic was one of the speakers and he explained the reasons of the involvement of the city of Kragujevac (Serbia-Montenegro) as host-city of the decentralized office of the LDA Central and Southern Serbia. During the conference "Tourism as means of relaunching local and regional economies" Kerim Medjedovic, delegate of the LDA Montenegro presented the activities of his LDA and in particular the project on rural tourism.

11. 3rd Seminar on Local Economic Development

The third seminar on Local Economic Development funded by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs was held in Umag (Croatia) with the support of the Local Democracy Agency (LDA) Verteneglio. It gathered 20 participants from the different LDAs. The aim of this project is to train two animators from each LDA in economic development. This seminar gave the participants the opportunity to strengthen their skills and to conduct a case study on their territory. At the end of the process each LDA will draft a sustainable project on local economic development. The last seminar within this programme will be organised in January 2005 in Ohrid ("Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia"), but the project will be followed-up in 2005 with the programme "Promoting local economic development in Western Balkans: youth groups capacity building", sponsored by the Norwegian Government.

12. MAHLDENET project presented in Monfalcone, Italy

In agreement with the Region Friuli-Venezia Giulia, the municipality of Monfalcone, Italy, organised a conference on the topic: "Citizens of a re-united Europe, Democracy of towns for solidarity beyond borders" on 26 and 27 October 2004 in Monfalcone. The meeting gathered representatives of municipalities from different towns of the Balkans such as Ohrid ("former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia"), Mostar, Prijedor, Tuzla, Zavdovici (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Gnjilane (Kosovo), Kragujevac, Nikšić, Nis, Subotica, (Serbia and Montenegro), Osijek, Sisak, Bertoniola/Verteneglio (Croatia). One of the aims of the meeting was to present the MAHLDENET Project: MAre Hadriaticum Local DEMocracy cross-border NETworks (funded in the framework of INTERREG budget line). The project aims at strengthening institutional cooperation and cooperation between political, economic and social actors involved in actions of development of local democracy in the trans-border area of the Adriatic Sea. The partnership includes regions, universities, NGOs and local authorities of the target area.

The Friuli Venezia Giulia Region has a strategic role because of its position on the border between Italy and the Balkans and for its Special Statute in the Italian Law. The partnership also encompasses the Association of Local Democracy Agencies and the Local Democracy Agencies since the LDAs are instruments at disposal of municipalities. Additionally, they are key-players in promoting local democracy and local development in the Balkans and in Eastern Europe.

13. South Eastern Europe Regional Ministry Conference recognises ALDA and the LDAs as important instruments of democratisation

The final declaration of the inter-ministerial conference "Effective Democratic Governance at the Local and Regional Level" which took place in Zagreb on 25 and 26 October 2004 states that "the Conference enabled Ministers and other participants to enter into a dialogue with the representatives of civil society, with the Association of Local Democracy Agencies (ALDA) and with associations of local authorities of SEE countries and their umbrella organisation, NALAS, on their respective expectations and agendas for local government reform".

A delegation of the Association of Local Democracy Agencies composed of Mr Martini, ALDA President, Mr Vinther, ALDA Vice-President, Ms Puskaric, Delegate of the LDA Sisak, Mr Fernetich, Delegate of the LDA Verteneglio and Mr Paris, ALDA Director Assistant, participated in the conference and were content of the public recognition of ALDA's work.

In the afternoon of the 25th, Mr Martini presented ALDA recommendations for efficient democratic governance at the local level based on the opinions and requests of civil society groups across the Balkans, which had been collected by the Local Democracy Agencies. On the same day, Mr Vinther chaired a workshop on "Citizen Participation" where Mrs Puskaric and Mr Fernetich contributed with their expertise from the field. In addition, Mr Di Stasi, President of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, underlined the significant contribution of the Local Democracy Agencies to citizens' participation and democratic governance.

14. ALDA present at COM-PA, the European Fair on Public Communication and Services to the Citizen and Businesses in Bologna, Italy

The Association of Local Democracy Agencies (ALDA) was present with an exhibition stand at COM-PA, the European Fair on Public Communication and Services to the Citizen and Businesses, which took place in Bologna, Italy, from 3 – 5 November 2004.

The event was attended by more than 25 000 administrators, executives, scholars and operators involved in the Public Administration sector. During the three days, debates, meetings, special initiatives, exhibitions and reviews depicted the diverse experiences and practices of today's public administration system.

ALDA's Project Manager Stefania presented the current projects of the Association in the debate "Communication and multi-ethnic groups", in collaboration with the Province of Gorizia.

15. Presentation of ARTE features on LDA Kosovo

In cooperation with the French-German television station ARTE and the Local Democracy Agency Gjilane, Kosovo, ALDA organised the screening of three ARTE features on Kosovo at the Council of Europe on 4 November 2004. The first feature presented the work of the LDA in Gjilane, which was preceded by a personal introduction given by Steve Duchene, Delegate of this LDA. This was followed by a feature produced this summer dealing with the social situation in Kosovo, in particular the role or problems of women and young people. The last feature treated the massacre in Srebrenica in Bosnia-Herzegovina during the war in 1995. The LDA Kosovo had helped with the production of all these features which exemplifies the good relationship that this LDA has established with international media.

All the features were produced by ARTE journalist Claire Stephan, who was present at the screening to give a short introduction of her work and to answer questions from the audience. About 25 participants attended the event, which coincided with the autumn session of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities.

16. ALDA established new contacts in Germany

Local authorities shape globalisation and globalisation shape local authorities, was the topic of the 9th federal conference of local authorities in Germany which was held in Magdeburg between 18 and 20 November 2004. The Association of Local Democracy Agencies (ALDA) was represented by their

German press officer, Dorothee Fischer, who could establish new contacts among the 100 participants from local authorities and relevant German organisations involved in development work such as the GTZ and InWent. For a long time, ALDA had expressed its wish to include more German partners in its network, for Germany has a long history of city-to-city cooperation, an experience which others countries could undoubtedly profit from. However, Germany is one of the few countries which does not provide for any national assistance mechanism for local authorities which wish to be involved in decentralised cooperation. Therefore, a paper including guidelines directed at the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development was drafted at the end of the conference. Through the event, ALDA succeeded to establish new relationships with potential German partners and Ms Fischer has drafted a strategy paper how to continue working in this direction in 2005.

17. Breakfast Briefing held in cooperation with the European Policy Centre in Brussels

Delegates and staff from the 11 Local Democracy Agencies in Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina and the "former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" presented their work on the field during a breakfast briefing at the European Policy Centre (EPC), a Brussels-based think tank, to relevant NGOs and journalists on 1 December 2004.

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18. Info tour for the Permanent Representation of Luxembourg to the Council of Europe

The Association of Local Democracy Agencies organised an information tour for the Permanent Representation of Luxembourg to the Council of Europe, which will fund the pilot project "To foster interethnic dialogue in the secondary schools of Mostar and its region" in the framework of the new Local Democracy Agency in Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina.

During this two-day visit, Ms Barbara Zeches, representative of Luxembourg, attended the official opening of the Local Democracy Agency Mostar (Bosnia and Herzegovina) on 22 November 2004. On the following day, she visited the LDA Montenegro, based in Niksic. Several meetings were organised with the vice-mayor of the host-city and with the beneficiaries of the activities of the LDA. Furthermore, Mr Kerim Medjedovic, delegate of the LDA Montenegro, presented the ongoing activities of the LDA.

Ms Zeches was very content to get to know the work of the LDAs in the field and ALDA will use this successful experience in the future to organise further info tours for its donors.

ANCI/ALDA Cooperation

1. Training of Trainers on how to improve participatory planning

The improvement of the Association of Local Democracy Agencies' internal strategic planning was only one of the many exercises of the Training of Trainers on Participatory Planning which took place in Ohrid, "Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", from the 1 - 10 November 2004. With the help of two trainers from the renowned Romanian organisation, FPDL (Partners for Local Development Foundation), the 22 participants coming from the 11 Local Democracy Agencies in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro, Kosovo and "Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" also acquired the skills of being a facilitator and they developed a full strategic plan for the imaginary place of Greentown. They will use the lessons learned to train local authorities and young people in their regions on the methodology of participatory planning as well as strategic planning. The methodology of the training was based on the manual "Building Bridges", elaborated with the support of UN Habitat. The training was rounded off with cultural exchanges between the participants: during a cultural evening, every participant had to present something from his/her region or country including food, music or games. In addition, the hosts from the Local Democracy Agency in Ohrid, the city itself being listed among UNESCO heritage, organised a visit to the famous monastery of St. Naum near the Albanian border.

2. Follow-up training sessions on conflict management in Croatia: Local Democracy Agency Osijek

Two training sessions on Conflict management in Osijek were conducted by Ms. Tatjana Tihoirovic and Mr. Siniša Maurus. The first training was held on 6th and 7th October 2004 and gathered 19 representatives of civil society. Seventeen representatives of local authorities from the Osijek-Baranja county participated in the second training was held on 11th and 12th October 2004.

The programme of the training focused on the following issues: introduction to conflict (causes of conflict and strategies how to deal with conflict), mediation, negotiation and role negotiation. The staff of the Local Democracy Agency in Osijek was very content with its successful media strategy. Several participants had learned about the training in the local newspaper and by listening to the local radio stations.

3. Follow-up training sessions on conflict management in Croatia: Local Democracy Agency Sisak

In the framework of the project "Capacity building for Local Authorities and Civil Society in South Eastern Europe" which has been implemented in the Croatian towns of Sisak, Hrvatska Kostajnica and Kutina and municipalities of Dvor, Gvozd, Topusko, Jasenovac and Sunja, the Local Democracy Agency Sisak organized a training on "Conflict management" for local authorities and for civil society representatives from the 5th to the 7th October 2004.

The specific objective of the project is the promotion of pluralism on the political as well as on a civil society level by strengthening institutions and organizations. The training contributed to this goal by

giving an introduction to the causes of conflict and their management. Sixteen representatives of local authorities and NGOs participated in the training which was conducted by Ms. Borjanka Metikos and Ms. Mirjana Geric Strizic, both external associates of the Local Democracy Agency Sisak.

4. Follow-up training sessions on conflict management in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Local Democracy Agency Zavidovici

The training on conflict management was held from the 24th to the 26th September under the supervision of Sladjan Ilic, LDA Zavidovici and Ramiz Becirovic, external expert from Tuzla.

In total, 27 persons participated in the training session which treated various topics including introduction to conflict management and differences; communication as aspect of conflict management; the role of negotiation and mediation. All the participants expressed the wish to participate in other training courses of the same type.

5. Follow-up training sessions on conflict management in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Local Democracy Agency Prijedor

The follow-up training for civil society representatives was successfully held on 24/25/26 of September 2004, in the localities of the Youth Center "Svjetonik" Prijedor. The discussions during these days were constructive and motivating and the participants stated that will use the new skills in their future work.

6. Follow-up training sessions on conflict management in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Local Democracy Agency Mostar

From the 6th to the 8th October 2004, the LDA Mostar organized the first training seminar for civil society representatives in the framework of the project "Action of capacity building for local authorities and civil society in Southern and Eastern Europe". Igor Kajgana and Sladjan Sehovic were the trainers in charge of the training.

Twenty representatives from various NGOs and associations attended the session, among them representatives from Nansen Dialogue Center, Unija studenata Djemal Bijedic, Omladinska Informativna agencija, Skola Omladinske Politike, Altruist Association, Graditelji mira, Studentski Zbor Sveucilista u Mostaru, La Strada Mostar, OKC Abrasevic, Forma F.

7. Follow-up training session on conflict management in the Local Democracy Agency in Ohrid, "Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia"

The Local Democracy Agency Ohrid held the training "Mastering changes" on the 23 and 24 September 2004 which representatives from NGOs from the cities of Resen, Ohrid, Struga and Kicevo, located in the south-west part of the country, attended. The training was conducted by Ms. Mirjana Lozanoska, Delegate, and Mr. Stojan Saveski, Assistant to the delegate of LDA Ohrid.

During the two days training, the civil society representatives had the opportunity to learn new skills and techniques for the resolution of conflicts. The first session of the training was dedicated to conflict at all levels of life: between countries, between local governments and neighbours, in organizations and families, between individuals, even within ourselves. Another part was dedicated to the techniques of conflict resolution including communication, the art of dialogue and the role of the negotiator. On the second day of the training the topic "Mediation and Power" was elaborated.

The same training was organised for councillors and civil servants from the three Municipalities (Ohrid, Struga and Meseista/Belcista) from the 27th to 29th September 2004. The exercises and case studies in this training laid particular emphasis on the decentralization process which is currently taking place in the country.

8. Follow-up training sessions on conflict management in the Local Democracy Agency Niksic, Montenegro

For the first time in the history of the Local Democracy Agency in Niksic a training with local elected representatives was organised. 11 deputies from 5 political parties participated in the training on conflict management. Heated debates on how to resolve conflict under the supervision of two trainers from the LDA Niksic filled the two-day training course.

LDA Activities

1. New Local Democracy Agency opened in Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina

The Association of Local Democracy Agencies (ALDA) has opened a new Local Democracy Agency in the city of Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina on 22 November 2004. It is the 11th Agency in the network and the third in Bosnia and Herzegovina besides Zavidovici and Prijedor.

The inauguration event in Mostar was attended by an international audience including the partners of the new Agency, representatives of the Council of Europe and other international organisations as well as by journalists and city officials including the Mayor of Mostar.

The partners involved in the process are so far:

City of Mostar (BiH), as host partner, Regione Puglia, Regione Sicilia, City of Montegrotto, City of Monfalcone (Italy), Region and Municipality of Vejle (Denmark), City of Kragujevac (Serbia and Montenegro) and City of Kayseri (Turkey).

In addition, the LDA Mostar has received financial support from the Principality of Liechtenstein and Luxembourg.

The inauguration will be preceded by a meeting of the main partners who appointed Roberto Maselli as the delegate of the new LDA and they discussed the priorities for the upcoming months. The LDA will focus its work on local economic development including sustainable development, capacity building, interethnic dialogue and trans-border co-operation

2. The Association Project for Prijedor, lead partner of the LDA Prijedor, launched a website on responsible tourism

The Association Project for Prijedor, lead partner of the LDA in Prijedor, launched a website on responsible tourism. For the moment, it is only available in Italian, but it will soon be translated into English.

Tourism is a fundamental aspect and can be a resource for those communities which have little economic development. It can be a way to development, it does not harm the local context from a social, historical and cultural point of view and it is a meeting point of different cultures.

Responsible tourism:

- Is far away from the "old fashioned" understanding of humanitarian help
- gives a new understanding of equal exchanges
- is a project for the development planned by local communities
- is sustainable

Travelling is also an opportunity to meet different cultures and it makes one aware of the need to get to know other people.

The people of the Balkans have an absolute need to do this, that is to start a slow, difficult but fundamental development also through a process of understanding their past (personal and collective) in order to face a long lasting reconciliation process. To do this, it is important that they escape a situation of isolation. The website will help making people more aware of these aspects.

If you want to indicate some of the spots that could be visited by tourists, please contact directly: Mr. Michele Nardelli, sol.tn@tin.it

3. Forum transfrontalier des associations de Kumanovo

A l'initiative du Conseil de l'Europe et de l'ADL du Kosovo, les 25 et 26 septembre derniers, un forum transfrontalier d'ONG du Kosovo, de la Serbie et de la Macédoine s'est tenu à Kumanovo. Cette activité, organisée avec l'Institut Est-Ouest, s'inscrit dans la logique de la mise en place de la micro-région " Gjilan-Presevo-Kumanovo ".

Créée dans le cadre de l'euro-région " Nis-Sofia-Skopje ", cette micro-région touche un secteur qui reste l'un des plus instables d'Europe : en 1999 la guerre au Kosovo touchait la ville de Gjilan, en 2000 la guérilla dans le sud de la Serbie frappait Presevo alors qu'un an plus tard un conflit armé prenait naissance en Macédoine dans la région de Kumanovo avant de s'étendre à l'ouest du pays.

Chacun de ces conflits aura vu une forte intervention de la communauté internationale et l'adoption d'accords de paix : Résolution 1244 des Nations Unies au Kosovo, Plan Covic pour la vallée de Presevo, Accord d'Ohrid en Macédoine. Malgré l'action importante de la communauté internationale, l'actualité montre toujours que l'apparente stabilisation reste fragile et que la résurgence d'une crise grave, voire d'un conflit armé, est toujours possible : tensions politique en 2003 en Sud Serbie, événements de mars 2004 au Kosovo, crise politique autour de la décentralisation en Macédoine...

Le forum de Kumanovo, en invitant les associations de ces trois régions à se rencontrer, avait comme objectif clair de contribuer à la stabilisation de cet espace par la reconstitution de véritables réseaux associatifs traversant les frontières et les appartenances communautaires.

En vue de cet événement, l'ADL du Kosovo a parcouru durant les mois d'été plus de 3'000 kilomètres à la rencontre des associations afin de faire leur connaissance et de les inviter au forum. Le travail fut fastidieux et le résultat à la hauteur : près de 400 représentants de quelques 100 associations venues de toute la micro-région et représentant toutes les communautés ont répondu à l'appel.

Organisé sur deux jours, le forum comprenait deux parties : le salon des associations, où plus de 40 organisations tenaient un stand, et 4 groupes de travail (jeunesse, femme, media, éducation) qui ont chacun réunit plus d'une centaine de participants.

La présence internationale était également au rendez-vous avec plus de 40 représentants venus du Conseil de l'Europe, de l'Union européenne, de l'OSCE, de l'UNDP...

Malgré les tragédies récentes vécues dans cette région et les tensions qu'elle connaît encore, ce forum a apporté une note d'optimisme : c'est en effet avec le plus grand naturel que les communautés des trois villes concernées ont développé des contacts... Contacts formels durant les groupes de travail et aussi informels autour d'un stand ou d'un café.

Le forum " Citizens for Peace and Development " fut donc un moment important pour la région et les médias l'ont bien fait ressentir, tant en Macédoine qu'au Kosovo, un peu moins néanmoins en Serbie. En effet, certaines télévisions ont fait l'ouverture de leur journal sur l'événement et ont parfois continué à développer l'information dans les jours suivants.

Le bilan est donc positif et appelle à poursuivre l'action. En attendant l'organisation probable d'une seconde édition de ce forum en 2005, l'ADL du Kosovo devrait développer des pistes de travail conjointement avec le Conseil de l'Europe et en collaboration avec l'Institut Est-Ouest qui reste le plus important acteur dans cette région.

4. LDA Prijedor delivered results of symbolic elections to EU representatives

On 12 and 13 June the Civic Forum of Prijedor and the Local Democracy Agency of Prijedor organised symbolic elections in Prijedor, Bosnia and Herzegovina. When the citizens of the EU countries voted for the European Parliament, the citizens of the Municipality of Prijedor also voted. Not for the European Parliament, of course. They expressed their symbolic vote of belonging to Europe, by putting their signature to the symbolic ballot paper saying 'I am also a citizen of Europe'. More than 6000 signed ballot papers were collected and there were finally delivered by the Civic Forum and staff of the LDA Prijedor to representatives of EU institutions on 8 and 9 November 2004. The parcel with the symbolic votes also bore a political message that Bosnia and Herzegovina together with the other countries from South Eastern Europe wishes to become a member of the European Union in order to further stabilise the region.

The trip to Brussels and Strasbourg was combined with a study visit in which almost 30 people from Prijedor participated. In Brussels they met representatives of the European Commission and MEP Doris Pack as well as with the Ambassador of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the EU. In Strasbourg, the group met with representatives of the Council of Europe and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe as well as with the Ambassador of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the Council of Europe.

The Local Democracy Agency Prijedor and the Civic Forum have confirmed their willingness to continue activities dealing with European issues.

5. LDA Kosovo involved in a training project for youth animators with the support of the Ministry of Youth

The Local Democracy Agency (LDA) Kosovo will be involved in a project supported by the Ministry of Youth aiming at giving Kosovar institutions a new curriculum for trainings. The project is in particular

directed at youth animators. During the first stage of the project, which will start in January 2005, the LDA will define the institutional framework using its expert knowledge in this field.

Non-formal education for young people has been developing in Kosovo since the crisis of 1998 and 1999, largely thanks to the presence of numerous international organizations working in the region. Many of them began developing activities and projects for young people to encourage reflection on moral and civic issues, and to build relations between the different ethnic communities. The work of youth groups in Kosovo is dynamic but a lack of structure restrains the efficiency and the coherence of the different initiatives. The Ministry in charge of this field, though conscious of this lack of structure, does not have any adequate resources to impose a standard working model for youth initiatives in Kosovo.

The Local Democracy Agency Kosovo wants to contribute to the work done in this field by implementing a project which will begin with a census of existing youth activities and trainings in Kosovo. This project will give guidelines to the animators and will serve as reference for youth organizations. It will be assessed by the Youth Ministry of Kosovo.

Several associations acting in the youth field in Kosovo and Europe are involved in the project. A public debate will take place in March 2005 in order to discuss relevant issues and the consequences of such a training structure with the main actors of youth activities in Kosovo. A series of exchanges between Kosovar and French experts will be organized throughout 2005. These exchanges will not only be a means to share skills and experience, but also to identify difficulties faced by those working in the field in both countries.

Partners

1. Kaunas – the city of possibilities

Kaunas is the city of possibilities, which is situated in the very centre of Lithuania and at the intersection of main highways and transport flows. The attractive living environment combines trade, public life, recreation zones and developed social facility. The convenient geographical position of the city and good communications with other Lithuanian cities and towns could turn Kaunas into the main logistical centre of Lithuania.

Kaunas is the leading city of Lithuania in the field of information technologies (IT). A favourable environment has been created for investments of foreign high technology companies, which are attracting qualified and mobile staff. The development of innovative technology is based on the effective collaboration between universities, science and trade institutions. Kaunas has built up huge scientific potential, Kaunas University of Technology and Vytautas Magnus University prepare high-level specialists of information technologies.

The scientific potential of Kaunas is not limited to information technologies. Apart from the above-mentioned Kaunas University of Technology and Vytautas Magnus University, Kaunas also hosts 10 universities or university departments. Following the needs of the market, they prepare qualified doctors, lawyers, managers, engineers, economists, programmers, agricultural and sports specialists etc., which can successfully work for foreign and Lithuanian companies.

The recently proposed project of the city dipole Vilnius – Kaunas, which was positively evaluated by the journal "Foreign Direct Investment" of the "Financial Times" group, should undoubtedly contribute to the development of Kaunas. The city dipole Vilnius – Kaunas has won the prize as Baltic Region of the Future and was qualified as the most important centre of the Baltic region.

Apart from the economic potential, the cultural life of Kaunas City has deep traditions, developed during the period of interwar Lithuania. Kaunas is the cradle of the Lithuanian theatre, opera, and museums as well as the place of the first song festivals. The inseparable parts of the cultural life of Kaunas are the jazz festival “Kaunas Jazz”, International Pazaislis Music Festival as well as the new traditional festival “Operetta at Kaunas Castle”.

Kaunas is also open to international co-operation. Kaunas City is very active not only in preparing and implementing projects with most of its 25 partner-cities, but Kaunas is also a member of various international organisations and networks, such as the Union of the Baltic Cities (UBC), European Cities Against Drugs (ECAD), the Hanseatic League etc. The most recent membership is the membership in the Association of Local Democracy Agencies. While Kaunas was not a member of ALDA, Kaunas already had a possibility to learn and exchange best practices participating in the EU Mayors project. And it gives a good incentive not only to participate, but also to initiate new projects within the ADLA network in the future.

Contacts established

- participation in the World Urban Forum Barcelona, 13 – 17 September 2004 (Martial Paris, Dobrica Milovanovic)
- Fact-finding Mission to Georgia, 27 September
- participation in the conference “Participation in policy-making: criteria for the selection of civic NGOs” in Brussels, 16 – 17 September 2004 and establishment of a new partnership with the Active Citizenship Network (Dorothee Fischer)
- participation in the 5th Forum for Cities and Regions in South Eastern Europe, Budva, Montenegro (Martial Paris)
- contacts with German organisations and local authorities at the conference “Local authorities shape globalisation, globalisation shapes local authorities”, Magdeburg (Germany) 18 – 20 November 2004 (Dorothee Fischer)
- the cities of Trento and Kaunas have become members of ALDA
- meeting with the staff of the East Midlands European Office in Brussels on 1 December 2004 (Dorothee Fischer, Per Vinther)
- participation in the Fourth European Conference for Human Rights, Nuremberg, 9 – 10 December 2004 (Dorothee Fischer)
- new contacts with the cities of Lille, Lyon and Nantes (France)
- new contacts with NI-CO (Northern Ireland Public Sector Enterprises)
- new contacts with the Association of the cities of Luxemborug (SYVICOL)
- LDA Prijedor and LDA Central and Southern Serbia participated in meetings in Alba, Trento and Rovereto

Agenda 2005

16 – 18 January: Last seminar on local economic development sponsored by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs

28 January: Bureau ALDA, Brussels

29 January: Governing Board, ALDA, Brussels

February: Steering Committee ANCI/ALDA Programme, Strasbourg

February: Forum in Belfast with Northern Irish local authorities (in cooperation with LGIB)

March: Training on group analysis technique within the programme "Promoting local economic development in the Western Balkans: youth groups capacity building" sponsored by the Norwegian Government

April: Training of trainers on local economic development within the Norwegian programme

May: Training of trainers on communication issues within the ANCI/ALDA programme sponsored by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Prijedor, Bosnia and Herzegovina

May: Information Day on South East Europe at the occasion of the Session of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, Strasbourg

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