



Brief summary of LDA foundation Armenia activities July-September period, 2014)

10 September, 2014

1. Grant Proposals

- “Local Democracy Agency” foundation Armenia submitted a project proposal for the call of Heinrich Boell foundation entitled “School of local democracy in Gyumri” for the students of Gyumri city in cooperation with LDA Georgia and Urban Foundation. The project aimed to foster the role of civil society in promoting fundamental freedom in Gyumri by developing a civil society network and virtual space for discussion of democracy issues for youngsters. As it was mentioned in the previous newsletter the reply was expected in August, 2014 and unfortunately it was rejected.

2. Code of good practice for civil participation in the decision-making process

During the workshop “Citizens Participation in decision-making process at the local level” in Gyumri in December 2013 the participants suggested to translate “Code of good practice for civil participation in the decision-making process” into Armenian as more organizations can have access to it. The manual is translated and ready for the distribution.

3. International participation

Within the frames of the project South East-E FVG region in Italy organized an international workshop entitled “Development of Economic Relations and strengthening the process of Participatory Democracy in the Caucasian Region and South East Europe” on 12th of July in Monfalcone, Italy. As FVG region is one of the international partners of LDA foundation Lusine Aleksandryan was also invited.

The introductory session of the meeting was held by Mrs Silvia Altran, Mayor of Monfalcone. Many representatives coming from Georgia and Armenia expressed their contribution to the project and readiness for the future cooperation. The Armenian delegation was represented by Mr Sargis Ghazaryan, Ambassador of the Republic of Armenia in Italy, Mrs Anna Fiorini Beriot, Responsible of the Cooperation between the Mediterranean area and Armenia in the Rhône-Alpes Region (France), and Lusine Aleksandryan, Delegate of LDA foundation in Armenia in Gyumri.



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The meeting was concluded by the intervention of **Mr Gianni Torrenti**, Regional Councilor for Culture and Solidarity of Friuli Venezia Giulia Autonomous Region, which showed the strategies and activities of the region in the cooperation for development.





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4. TRANSBORDER COOPERATION PROGRAMME

LDA Georgia/ LDA Armenia

On 8th of September a meeting was organized at the initiative of ALDA, LDA Georgia and LDA Armenia in Gyumri. The meeting aimed to identify strategic paths of cooperation with development and plan future joint activities. The event was attended by LDA Delegates Lusine Aleksandryan and Nino Tvaltvadze, Local partners of the LDAs (Nodar Jikia-Georgian Young Lawyers' Association – Kutaisi branch Program Director /GILA/, Levon Barseghyan- Journalists' club "Asparez", Armine Tukhikyan – Urban Foundation for Sustainable Development, Vahan Movsisyan-Communities Finance Officers Association, Vahan Tumanyan-"Shirak Centre" NGO), Municipalities of Gyumri (head of educational department- Hayk Sultanyan and Kutaisi (head of Administration - Zviadi Javakhia), Secretary General of ALDA Antonella Valmorbida.

Lusine and Nino presented the situation of two LDA's, difficulties and opportunities, implemented projects.

At the next step of the meeting discussion was held about the future cooperation between LDA Georgia and LDA Armenia. It has to be underlined that partners from the both sides, were actively involved in the discussion. Three main topics were identified for future cooperation:

- Women's rights;
 - Tourism development;
 - IDP and conflict resolution;
1. Women's rights – particularly women's participation in politics. As the percentage of participation is low in both countries, LDA Armenia and Georgia can work with candidates, it was also admitted that in Armenia there are women Mayors – one was participating in the event and the Georgian delegation got to know her, so we decided to make some TV show in order to inspire Georgian women too, because we do not have women mayors. Kutaisi city hall representative promised their assistance too if this project idea will be developed;
 2. Conflict resolution projects – both countries have the conflict affected area. As for LDAs it is not primarily aim to work on conflict resolution, LDA Georgia and Armenia can make some project in order to: support economic development, to raise self-awareness on different issues concerning democracy and human rights;
 3. Regional tourism development. A tourism forum is planned to organize in March-April 2015 in Armenia by Rhone-Alpes region and Afrat organization. As Rhone-Alpes is the lead partner of LDA Armenia the organizational part will be realized by LDA Armenia. Lusine was going to have the meeting with AFRAT after the meeting with the partners and Georgian delegation so still didn't know what will be the priorities. Georgian



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delegation suggested that different tours like wine-tour can be organized in the frames of the project which can be started from Georgia and end in Armenia.

(Lusine held the meeting with Afrat afterwards and it became clear that the project will only focus on the implementation of a forum on tourism issues. It can be discussed and decided with Rhone-Alpes if Georgian delegation involved in tourism issues can be invited also to the forum).

4. LDA Armenia and LDA Georgia can jointly work on migration problem, because during the visit it was obvious that it is a huge problem in Armenia like in Georgia.



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5. Regional Seminars of Council of Europe



On 26 March 2014 the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe adopted Recommendation 351(2014)¹ on local democracy in Armenia. The report acknowledges the efforts made by the Armenian authorities to implement the provisions of the European Charter of Local Self-Government, and at the same time identifies a number of areas of concern, calling for further improvement. In particular, it is recommended to review the legislation for implementing the principle of subsidiarity, to foster inter-municipal co-operation and increase the capacity of community councils, and to define and ensure the exercise of full and exclusive powers for local authorities.



Regional seminars (North and South) were organized to disseminate the findings of the monitoring report and its recommendations among Armenian local elected representatives, and to foster a discussion about measures and policies that could help putting in practice these

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recommendations. The ideas and suggestions coming from participants were consolidated into a “Call to the Government of Armenia” to be delivered to the Government.

The seminars were organised by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe in cooperation with:

- Communities Association of Armenian (CAA)
- Armenia Municipal Councillors’ Association (AMCA)
- Communities Finance Officers Association (CFOA)
- Local Democracy Agency Foundation, Armenia

Georgian delegation and Lusine Aleksandryan were present at the seminar in Gyumri and took part as well in the thematic debates. ALDA Secretary General Antonella Valmorbidia was invited to take part as a moderator in one of the thematic debate “The role of municipal councils”.



6. Meeting with AFRAT representatives

On 10th of September Lusine Aleksandryan received representatives of AFRAT Sebastien Favier (Project manager) and Martine Chaligne (Project coordinator) and Anahit Davtyan (coordinator of Rhone-Alpes-Armenia cooperation in Armenia) at LDA office in Gyumri.

The **aim** of the meeting was to update LDA Armenia on the upcoming forum that is going to be implemented in Armenia in 2015.

Preliminary objectives of the upcoming forum presented by Afrat and Rhone-Alpes:

- To mobilize a Group in Armenia on "tourism" issues
- To encourage the sharing of structural projects on regional or national level
- To continue community consultation in the field of tourism (mayors’ delegation, eductour)



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Rhone-Alpes has implemented some projects on tourism issues (Rambling, Bread and Breakfast, Valuation of heritage, Ecotourism, tourist information) in several areas of Armenia, it is suggested by them to choose three areas for the study tour during the forum that touches one problem and can be discussed after during the three workshops.

A long discussion took place around the issue of the place of the forum. The problem is that it is more relevant to organize it in Gyumri, but Rhone-Alpes-Armenia cooperation programs are situated in Lori, Tavush, Gegharkunik regions. The implementation of the study tour and workshop at the same day is practically impossible because of the trip duration. If the delegation makes the study tour and the workshops on the same day, it means time will more be spent on the roads than on the event itself.

Preliminary it is agreed to organize the forum in Gyumri, to prepare 3 short movies on these three areas (to make virtual study visits) show them during three workshops and bring forward the solution of one problem. The whole event can last 2 days. 1st day will include a meeting in the French Embassy to Armenia and after a trip from Yerevan to Gyumri will take place. A plenary session will be organized in Gyumri and the workshops will take place on the second day in the morning.

After the meeting Afrat representatives with Anahit Davtyan and Lusine Aleksandryan visited technological centre of Gyumri to consider that premise as a place for the forum.

All the discussed issues were taken into consideration for further consideration of Rhone-Alpes and Afrat delegation will be in Armenia in December for the settlement of final issues connected with the tourism issues.

7. Meeting of Gyumri and Kutaisi municipality representatives

On 10th of September a meeting took place at LDA Gyumri office between head of Administration of Kutaisi municipality Zviadi Javakhia and of Department deputy head of programs, external relations and-protocol of Gyumri municipality Mkrtich Chartaryan. It was discussed during the meeting to renovate the relations between two cities as in the past Gyumri and Kumayri were brother cities and a kind of memorandum of understanding was prepared. It was decided to make changes on the document (both municipalities will work on it) and after the agreement with the mayors to sign the document of collaboration.



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8. Meeting with Armenian National Platform of EAP CSF

On 23rd of September Lusine Aleksandryan participated in the meeting of ANP EAP CSF of Armenia. The 1st point touched the issue of Armenia's joining the Custom's Union.

It has been a year since the RA President Serzh Sargsyan announced about Armenia's intention to join the Customs Union and participate in the formation of the Eurasian Economic Union (EaEU), which in practice meant failure of the initialed Association Agreement with the EU- a plan that was developed in four-year-long intensive and productive negotiations between the RA and EU. Since then, the Armenian National Platform (ANP) of the EU Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum (EaP CSF) has several times came up with statements expressing disagreement with the foreign policy course of the official Yerevan, emphasizing the threats posed to the sovereignty and national security of the country and voiced concerns over the disrupted reform process in the RA.

It is with a deep concern that the ANP warns of deepening split among the Armenian society, which results from the disputes around the Eastern Partnership, Ukrainian crisis and diverging views on the Moscow-West confrontation. By the way, sharp contradictions around these issues, as a rule, are not directly related to the vital interests of our country and specific problems of Armenia's development. This unhealthy phenomenon came as an immediate result of the global information war and primarily the unprecedented manipulative impact of Russian TV channels transmitted in Armenia in an open network. Armenian National Platform has already addressed the relevant authorities regarding the issue of unacceptable propaganda for xenophobia carried out by a licensed broadcaster registered in Armenia in accordance with RA legislation (see [ANP statement of 07.04.2014](#)). Unfortunately, RA authorities failed to take measures to address the threats to information security of the country and the violation of national legislation.

ANP has repeatedly offered to RA authorities, and primarily to the National Assembly to initiate substantive discussions on the whole range of issues regarding the milestone decision of September 3. No discussions in an official public format were organized in this regard, both before and after the September 3 announcement of RA president. Moreover, it would be of no surprise if the bill on RA's accession to the EaEU, which is a product of questionable diplomatic procedures, will be hastily ratified in an extraordinary session of the parliament, without proper preparations and discussions. This reality is a proof to some serious drawbacks in the decision making system of the country when it comes to political decisions regarding the long-term prospects of the fate of the nation and the state.

Armenian National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum expresses its strong dissatisfaction and disagreement with the decision of RA government to join the Customs/Eurasian



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Economic Union and failure to initial the Association Agreement with the European Union. At the same time, ANP is deeply disappointed with absence of a principle position on the foreign policy course and reform agenda among the oppositional parties represented in the RA parliament, and inability of the parties that criticized the September 3 decision of Serzh Sargsyan, to come up with a common action.

In the current state of affairs, ANP expects the mobilization of the Armenian society for the sake of its national interests and considers its main task the raising of citizens' awareness and responsibility for the future of the country.

Following this it was decided to prepare brochures or leaflets and to distribute among the population that will really reflect all positive and negative sides of joining Custom's Union and what Armenia has lost while refusing signing the Association Agreement. This brochure will rise people's awareness and get right knowledge concerning these two concepts.

(But On 10th of September Armenia signed the agreement for joining Customs Union)

It was suggested to form groups from the participants of ANP to make visits to the regions and organize different kinds of events (forums, debates) with local civil society, active population. Still the themes should be elaborated and discussed. I also suggested Boris Navasardyan our help and our office of regional visits.

9. Recruitment of a new assistant

As it was informed you in June my assistant Esmarida Poghosyan terminated her contract with LDA Armenia foundation. Now Lusine Aleksandryan has announced about the vacancy and receiving resumes. After 15th of October the recruitment process will take place.