



WE NEED REMEMBRANCE FOR A PEACEFUL FUTURE **By Per Vinther, ALDA President**

On January 27th, 1945, 66 years ago, the German concentration and extermination camp of Auschwitz-Birkenau was liberated by the Russian Army, giving name to the International Holocaust Memorial Day on that date every year.

A new Europe has been built on the ruins of war and hatred, with the conviction that something like the Shoah should never be allowed to happen again.

Against such a back-ground Local Democracy Agencies were established in the wake of the conflict leading to the break-up of the former Yugoslavia with the objective of helping to build a society founded on democratic principles, rule of law and respect for human and

minority rights.

Engaging various ethnic groups in this endeavour and at times mediating between them has reconfirmed to the Local Democracy Agencies and their umbrella organisation the Association of Local Democracy Agencies (ALDA) that the past plays an important role in shaping a future based on tolerance and reconciliation.

Together with its partners, ALDA works daily for intercultural understanding and active participation of citizens in its programme on Active Remembrance. The President of ALDA, Per Vinther, stresses that "one of our goals is to bring people to remember their past and learn from mistakes their ancestors have made! This also has a direct bearing on the appreciation of the benefits of living in a democratic society"

The Association of Local Democracy Agencies, ALDA, is heavily engaged in promoting active citizenship within the EU Programme "Europe for Citizens" and in that vein has embarked also on the project E-For, Education for Remembrance, as a natural element of active citizenship.

Currently, the project PEACE (Peace Education and Active Citizenship in Europe) reunites partners from all over Europe to reflect upon innovative ways of transmitting knowledge of past crimes and injustice to generations having grown up in a peaceful society. New pedagogic methodologies are currently being tested in local events and will be discussed in an international conference uniting experts on historical education as well as local authorities and NGOs interested in implementing projects on active remembrance.

Thus, ALDA is linking its involvement for better local governance with the struggle for active remembrance that is so crucial for the survival of our peaceful and democratic societies.



THE EASTERN PARTNERSHIP CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM : A GREAT CHALLENGE FOR ALDA **Antonella Valmorbida, Director of ALDA, elected co-chair**

During the Civil Society Forum for Eastern Partnership Steering Committee, which took place in Brussels (1st of February), the position of Temporary Speaker of M. Vialicka was transformed into a co chairmanship between Antonella Valmorbida, EU Coordinator, and Director of ALDA, and Ulad Vialicka, Director of Euro Belarus.

"It is a great challenge for ALDA to support civil society in Eastern Europe" stated Mrs Antonella Valmorbida.

The balance co-chairmanship was approved by the Steering Committee to share the burden and responsibilities and also corresponding to the organisational scheme of the Steering Committee, where the EaP and the EU representatives are balanced in the Working Group meetings.

The appointment is a great opportunity and challenge for ALDA to be present and work in Eastern Europe with contacts and projects. Antonella Valmorbida is also involved and leader of the lobbying group which promotes the visibility and the contact of the CSF in the European Institutions. In this perspective, number of meetings took place in Brussels, like with the Commissioner Fuele, the President of the Committee of the Regions, Mrs. Bresso and the President of the European and Social Economic Committee, Staffan Nilsson.

A meeting with the Secretary General will take place soon in Strasbourg.



ALDA AND LDAS AT THE NEXPO FAIR IN SARAJEVO (10th-11th of march)

The next 10th and 11th of March will take place in Sarajevo "NEXPO 2011", the first Local Government Fair including participants from South Eastern Europe. ALDA is actively involved in the programme of this event with a stand and the participation of its President, Per Vinther, in the first panel on Good Governance and EU Integration (see <http://nexpo.nalas.eu/>).

The stand will mostly present the last activities of ALDA on local governance and citizens participation as well as the activities of the Local Democracy Agencies from Mostar, Prijedor and Zavidovici. "NEXPO 2011" is organized by NALAS, network of associations of local authorities of South East Europe, and more than 1,000 people will be participating, representatives from local municipalities, associations and international organizations.



CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION TO GIVE NEW LIFE TO TOWN TWINNING On 13th January, CITIES project final conference took place in Dordrecht (NL). Workshops and exchange of experiences at the International Conference on Town-twinning Initiatives

Town twinning as a way to enhance local tolerance and mutual understanding, to help and facilitate integration, to multiply relations: these are some of the focus points emerged from the Conference held in Dordrecht, The Netherlands, on 13th January. Coming to its conclusion, CITIES project revealed a valuable and effective means to develop citizens' participation at a local level.

The event – organized by ALDA, together with the Municipality of Dordrecht, the Netherlands, and its partner BMC – was the final conference of CITIES (Creativity and

Innovation in Town-twinning Initiatives in Europe and South-eastern Europe), a EU-funded project, led by ALDA, aimed at revitalizing and creating town-twinning relationships through innovative methods in Europe.

"Dordrecht has always been an international city. This very townhall was built in the 14th century as a trading place to attract textile merchants from Antwerp. No wonder twinning started in a very early phase – declared A.A.M. Brok, Mayor of Dordrecht upon his welcome speech –. The first official Dordrecht twinning with Hastings in England started in the seventies of the last century, more recent are the twinings in Africa with Bamenda in Cameroon and with Dordrecht in South-Africa and latest are our contacts with Varna in Bulgaria to have a connection with the new European countries. Dordrecht thinks that twinning adds important aspects to its society, because twinning for us is not just helping other cities but especially learn from our twinning partners as well. And that exchanging best practices of excellent ideas will prove to be inspirational and fruitful – the Mayor of Dordrecht concluded –. You know what we say: Twinning is Winning." To the Conference took part approx. 45 foreign representatives part originating, inter alia, from Albania, Lithuania, Macedonia and Bulgaria. Further participation consisted of representatives of Dutch municipalities, the foundations town twinning and the COS Zuid Holland (Centre for International cooperation).

"Twinning between cities and towns across Europe has existed successfully for a good many years – stated in his opening speech Mr Per Vinther, ALDA President – but lately a certain "twinning fatigue" has set in. The more traditional culture and sport elements of a partner relationship between cities seem to have lost their attraction and the injection of new life – and purpose – into Town Twinning is clearly needed. Joined by a number of dedicated partners the Association of Local Democracy Agencies has taken up this challenge within the EU Programme "Europe for Citizens" with the objective of identifying new ways and skills of co-operation between partner cities which bring together all players in the community: local authorities, business and civil society.

ALDA has been working in the Balkans for more than ten years in a bottom-up approach to encourage local authorities and civil society organisations to co-operate about improving living conditions in their community, involving also transfer of know-how and best practices from international partners in what could be called multilateral twinning. Based on this experience – pointed out Mr Per Vinther – ALDA plays a relevant role in promoting city-to-city co-operation drawing on its members and partners in the rest of Europe. Town Twinning is but one component of the effort to bring EU populations closer together and embrace the objective and values of a united Europe so the inclusion of cities and national associations of local authorities from South East Europe in the CITIES project has been an important element for ALDA.

Dissemination of the ideas and suggestions which have been tabled during various conferences in the partner countries and in the concluding international conference in Dordrecht – declared ALDA President – should encourage other cities across Europe to engage in Town Twinning as a means to share experience and learn from each other, to bring the countries of South East Europe closer to the EU and to promote active citizenship in general."

The project was based on a partnership of six associations of municipalities in Albania, Slovakia, Macedonia, two in Bulgaria and Lithuania. During the year it lasted, the partners organized national workshops aiming to identify innovative tools for town-twinning and the variety of fields in which such a relationship can develop. This final conference taking place in Dordrecht has gathered twinning experiences from Dutch municipalities and best practices from all over Europe from the partner countries and ALDA.

Six workshops were held in smaller groups allowing concrete discussions and encounter of many municipality representatives, in order to conclude on new cooperation projects, that could lead to future town-twinning agreements. The International Twinning Conference for Innovation provided information on international cooperation at local level today, and showed the possibilities that the 'Europe for Citizens' programme of the European Union offers.

The Cities project has been implemented by the Association of Local Democracy Agencies (ALDA) in cooperation with the Association of Municipalities from Albania, the Regional Association of Municipalities "Central Stara Planina" and the Union of Bulgarian Black Sea Local Authorities from Bulgaria, the Association of Local Authorities in Lithuania, ECOVAST –National section for Republic of Macedonia, the International Co-operation Agency of the Association of Netherlands Municipalities, and the Union of Towns and Cities of Slovakia. The project was launched on 1st February 2010 and will finish on 31st January 2011.



THE LISBON TREATY: ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP TO MAKE EUROPE GROW

The Lisbon Treaty is not and will not be only a piece of paper. It is an instrument to make EU institutions more democratic, giving citizens more space for active participation. It provides some guidelines to modernize Europe and enables it to achieve the objectives of its fifty years of history: to be an instrument of peace and development.

These are, in short, the conclusions of the conference on the Lisbon Treaty that took place in Thiene (IT), promoted by the Municipality, its Urban Center and ALDA, Association of Local Democracy Agencies.

In her speech, Maria Rita Busetti, Mayor of Thiene, underlined the importance of the opening to European culture for local communities. The Municipality of Thiene opened,

with the Urban Center, its window on Europe, to inform people and make them participate in those lots of opportunities it offers to all of them

Antonella Valmorbidia, Director of ALDA, has emphasized the role of local communities and authorities in building a Europe of citizens. "Active participation in local decision making process –she said – is the only instrument that can guarantee development. And this is possible only with a strong civil society, willing to get involved and take its responsibility".

An important instrument of information and animation about Europe at local level, about its powers and opportunities, is the Europe Direct network, about which Renzo Michieletto, from the Veneto Region Office of Europe Direct, spoke. This is a great network of 500 branches in 27 European countries, 50 in Italy and 3 in the Veneto Region, that the European Commission created to give citizens the necessary knowledge and make them closer to the institutions and actors.

Antonio Di Lorenzo, editor in chief of the Journal of Vicenza, tried to approach a bit more in this world seemingly far away the many participants at the conference.

He asked the Meps Mara Bizzotto, Lega Nord, and Debora Serracchiani, Democratic Party, to explain what being a woman in the top European institution means, with regard to their work as well as for their expectations. It was possible to know that they are engaged in a not well known task that has significantly effects in everyday life of all of us.

Concerning the Lisbon Treaty Bizzotto and Serracchiani showed shadows and highlights. The shadows are, as Mara Bizzotto said, the lack of a true soul constituent of this document and the remained imbalance between institutions, since the only elected, the Parliament, in fact, do not have full legislative power.

Debora Serracchiani, sharing some limits of the Treaty, stated that it contains major advantages, especially for greater democracy and transparency, with a better balance between the Parliament and the European Commission and an increased role of citizens.

Both have, however, stated that Italy, one of the most important founders of Europe, would play a greater role in Europe, to be truly protagonist and bridge the gap in attitudes and weight that separates it from other countries that in recent years in the Europe have invested in people, ideas and relationships.

In the afternoon two workshops provided an opportunity to discuss the participation of civil society in decision-making process at local level, and the role of local government in the Europe reformed by the Lisbon Treaty.



EUROPE CLAIMS THE BELARUSIAN GOVERNMENT RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Joint Statement of the representatives of the National Platforms of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum

To pay permanent attention to the situation with human rights in Belarus is called upon the European and the Eastern Partnership Region countries Government by the representatives of the National Platforms of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum.

In a joint statement they also call on the government of Belarus to restrain from violations of its international commitments in this field.

They make a plea to European people and governments asking to react against the situation in Belarus, bearing in mind joint aspiration of the partner countries of Eastern Partnership towards integration to the European area of freedom, security and justice.

The representatives of the National Platforms of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum, (Tamar Khidasheli, Georgian National Platform, Ulad Vialichka, Belarusian National Platform, Igot Kogut, Ukrainian National Platform, Avetik Ishkhanyan, Armenian National Platform, Victor Cotruta, Moldovan National Platform, Vugar Bayramov, Azerbaijani National Platform, and Iris Kempe, CSF participants from EU member states) call upon the European Commission and the European Parliament to continue with their efforts towards

observance of fundamental human rights in Belarus, civil societies of the countries of Eastern Partnership region to provide any possible support to their colleagues from Belarus and both of them to make efforts and mediate the building up of a constructive and sustainable dialogue among Belarusian Government, political opposition and the civil society with the aim of finding the way to a peaceful solution from the crisis and in the sake of improving political climate and stability in the country.

The representatives of the National Platforms of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum, are deeply concerned about the human rights situation in Belarus, in particular regarding information on detention of opposition candidates and their supporters in the aftermath of presidential elections, mistreatment of the detained, further politically motivated detentions, searches and pressure on political and civil activists, journalists, lawyers and human rights defenders, and equally concerned about the growing gap in communication and lack of dialogue between the official structures and the wider groups of the civil society in Belarus.



COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICES, CAPACITY BUILDING FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES IN TURKEY

The two days activities in the framework of LAR 2 (Further support to Local Administrative Reform in Turkey), conducted by the Director of ALDA, Mrs. Antonella Valmorbida, took place in Antalya the 24th and 25th of January 2011.

70 medium size municipalities took part in the training which based on the presentation of best practices in local government.

The experiences presented with the support of videos are :

1. the city of Strasbourg: intermodal urban transport
2. the city of Reggio Emilia : the international experience of social services for the infants

and Reggio Children

3. the city of Brindisi : an experience of dialogue with citizens

4. the city of La Paz and the World bank Institute : tackling corruption

The training was interactive and made the participants living a peer to peer experience, which is so useful for local government and civil servants. A specific case on tourism, was presented by the Mayor Necdet Aksoy , from the city of Sanfranbolu. The second day was open to the a civil servant of the Ministry of Interior, whom exchanged many concrete inputs with the participants.

The module on Communities of Practices will continue throughout February and March and the final join training will be in Ankara on the 6th and 7th of April 2011.



LOCAL GOVERNMENTS IN EUROPE: ALDA AND UNPD STUDY VISIT FOR TURKISH CIVIL SERVANTS IN UK (20th-27th of February)

A delegation of elected representatives, staff from local authorities and professional managers from Turkey, participated from the 20th to the 27th of February 2011 at the study visit in England "Local Governments in Europe: responsibilities, competencies and management", organized by ALDA and UNDP.

The visit sought an interactive approach of the relation between European Union's Local Authorities and Turkish ones providing to the Turkish participants a view over the local administrative framework of EU countries.

The aim of the project was to train the civil servants and engage them into a critic, positive dialogue with several European local and regional authorities thus strengthening their capacity to implement the administrative reform and a new legislation.

The activity designed was that of a study tour to England (Birmingham-Wolverhampton-South Staffordshire District-Bristol-London) enabling the participants to gain a first experience of European best practices in local self-government through meetings with their European counterparts and seminars on specific topics. Through this project, eight Turkish selected local authorities were subject to increase their capacity and vision in terms of knowledge and good practices. The Turkish local Authorities involved are: Trabzon Special Provincial Administration, Şanlıurfa Special Provincial Administration, Nazilli District Municipality, Bandırma District Municipality, Mersin Metropolitan Municipality, Kocaeli Metropolitan Municipality, Polatli District Municipality, Nilüfer District Municipality.

More specifically, United Kingdom International Study Tour was planned to support activities on improvement of land development and planning services in local government and support simplification of approval processes of construction and occupancy licences.

The project was characterized by field visits to Municipalities (Birmingham and Wolverhampton City Councils) with ranging scales, relevant institutions in planning and licenses (the Royal Town Planning Institute, RTPI and the Local Authorities Building Controllers, LABC) and on site observations. In addition to this, trainers from different EU member countries (Sweden with SALAR, France with AFCCRE and Italy with IPRES) delivered presentations on their national systems.

The first day of the study tour began with a field visit to Birmingham City Council and, especially with the welcoming of Mrs. Antonella Valmorbida, ALDA Director, and the Deputy Lord Mayor of the city, Councillor Michael Wilkes. After the

introductory meeting, Sir Albert Bore, representative of LGA- Local Governments Authorities and former President of the Committee of the Regions, delivered a presentation on "Local Government Relationship and Involvement with the European Union". The delegation was hosted by Wolverhampton City Council and it was welcomed by Cllr Roger Lawrence, member of ALDA's Bureau.



ALDA STAFF MEETING 2011 IN SUBOTICA (SRB) (25th-28th of January)

ALDA Staff meeting 2011 took place in Subotica from 25th – 28th of January. The meeting was held with a purpose to get the members to meet each other, to exchange their views and opinions in different topics of work, to get to know about the overall project progress in their Association, and improve some skills through training. All ALDA staff members were involved in this meeting.

In a three day working period, staff members conducted several training lessons, discussed about resources and fund raising, practised communication and exchanging of information; besides they discussed issues regarding past ALDA projects or/and difficulties in the project management, as well as activities and options for improvement of their work in years to come.

Trainings, discussions, exchanging views and skills improvement were held separately during the first two days of the meeting by two ALDA project management and implementation experts Biljana Zasova and Marco Boaria.

On the third day, director Antonella Valmorbida presented the past year results, aims, objectives and focus for upcoming 2011 and discussed organizational structure and staff improvement.

After a three days work, general conclusion is that all staff members dealing with different types of tasks within ALDA are showing great responsibility and whole-hearted efforts in their work, but also that there is a place for improvement.

FIGHTING CORRUPTION SUCCESSFULLY: ONE CITY AT A TIME A common task together with the Regional Programme Working Together, in Budapest



ALDA is partner of the programme *Working Together*, gathering a large number of training institutions for local governments in Eastern Europe since its creation. The focus is capacity building for local authorities and support of civil society. The annual meeting of the programme took place in Budapest on the 28th and 29th of January at the European Youth Centre of Budapest.

It focused on the assessment of the activities related to the programme Fighting

Corruption at the Local Level.

The leader organisation, FPD Romania invited 20 participants implementing the strategy and 4 cases were presented. Craiova Municipality. It is the capital of Dolj County, has more than 300.000 inhabitants and a rich history, attested in documents since 1475. It is a powerful industrial city and an important educational center with rich cultural life. Craiova Local Government has more than 500 employees, a directly elected Mayor and 27 elected councillors.

Zabok and Vrbovec, two cities from Croatia.

The Georgian team of anticorruption practitioners (Girogi Meshkidze, Helen Romelashvili from Civitas Georgica) and Lanchkhuti city.

Sokółka City (Poland).

Participants received the booklet "*Healthy Organizations, curing and preventing corruption in local governments*" that describes shortly the anticorruption approach.

The event was attended for ALDA by the Director, Mrs. Antonella Valmorbida, member of the Steering Committee of the programme Working Together



SIGNING CEREMONY OF THE COOPERATION CONVENTION BETWEEN HERMANVILLE-SUR-MER (FR) AND VEVCANI (MK)

Mr. Jacques Lelandais, Mayor of Hermanville-sur-Mer and Mr. Pero Ilievski, Mayor of Vevcani, signed a Convention for cooperation between the two cities on 17th January 2011. The Convention is expected to have positive impact on youth exchange, ICT, multimedia libraries and schools, tourism and cultural heritage, etc.

The delegation of Hermanville-sur-Mer, composed of 11 Municipal Councillors, public servants and experts was happy to visit Vevcani during the traditional Vevchani Carnival, a Macedonian local and cultural tradition. The two Mayors discussed similarities between the two cities on architectural, cultural and historic level and expressed hopes for productive cooperation.

The signature followed after several technical meetings where general objectives of the cooperation had been discussed. During the six day visit, the French delegation and different representatives of Vevcani Municipality, held several workshops presenting the two regions and their structure. The workshops were themed according to objectives of the cooperation: folklore, tourism and cultural heritage; youth exchange and equality rights; education, information and multimedia, etc.

The group of elected representatives from Hermanville-sur-Mer, expressed its gratitude for the warm Macedonian reception, admired the Carnival spirit and held successful meetings with the institutional managers of Vevcani.

"The signing of this Convention meets our objectives and completes our mutual cooperation. The Convention was the key addition to our development policy and cultural progress" - said Mr. Ilievski, the Mayor of Vevcani.

The three year Convention will enter into force at the beginning of this year.

Town twinning is part of the Project for decentralized cooperation between Republic of Macedonia and the Region of Lower Normandy, France. This program is coordinated by the Association of local democracy agencies (ALDA).

For any further information about the project please consult:

<http://crbn-mk.courriers.info/francais>

<http://alda-europe.eu>

or contact Ivana Dimitrovska: ivana.dimitrovska@aldaintrenet.org

CALLS FOR PARTNERSHIP



A) Call for partnership for 2 Volunteers (French or residents in France)

B) Call for partnership FONDS FRANCOPHONE DES INFOROUTES (19th call for proposals)

C) Call for partnership SUPPORT TO CIVIL SOCIETY SERBIA

D) Call for partnership NON-STATE ACTORS AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES PROGRAMME FOR THE BALTIC SEA REGION (within the framework of priorities of the Northern Dimension)

E) Call for partnership PRINCE 2010 – EU 27 (Lot 2 Awareness-raising actions)

F) Call for partnership EUROPE FOR CITIZENS – SUPPORTING MEASURES

G) Call for partnership EUROPE FOR CITIZENS – CITIZENS' PROJECTS

H) Call for partnership EUROPE FOR CITIZENS – ACTIVE EUROPEAN REMEMBRANCE

Traineeship in the area of projects development