



# Association of Local Democracy Agencies

## *Activity Report 2009*



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# Foreword by ALDA President



Mr. Per Vinther

**Per Vinther, ALDA President**

Dear Readers,

In 2009, ALDA could celebrate 10 years of existence and in spite of the global financial crisis the activity level remained high. The main event of the year was no doubt the celebration of the anniversary with a fabulous birthday cake donated by our Polish member, the City of Bydgoszcz. However, many of our members among local authorities have felt the effects of the crisis and have had to reduce their involvement in our projects or with individual Local Democracy Agencies. Similarly, member or partner NGOs have unfortunately experienced difficulties in finding donors for worthwhile projects. Hopefully, this situation will soon be a thing of the past so that financial worries do not distract us from our prime objectives.

The LDAs continue their activities on the ground depending on the local needs while remaining part of the ALDA network, being involved in larger projects. Cutting across the activities in the Western Balkans is still the support for the preparation of the countries in their aspirations towards

membership of the European Union.

Our Micro Credit scheme for South Eastern Europe, supported by the Norwegian Government, finally moved into the operational phase in 2009, having also suffered from the worsening financial climate. It has proven particularly successful in Croatia and Serbia whereas the existence of a multitude of competing schemes in Bosnia and Herzegovina has meant that no loans under our scheme have been disbursed there. The Micro Credit scheme will shortly be extended to Albania and we will have to deploy efforts towards making the scheme self-sustainable.

In the course of the year, ALDA has become involved in the civil society part of the Eastern Partnership which within the framework of the EU's Neighbourhood Policy places extra focus on six of its eastern neighbours: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. ALDA is already involved in projects in all of these countries and the Governing Board has consequently adopted a forward-looking policy paper on enlargement of the LDA network that opens the way for establishing LDAs in these countries over the coming years. An LDA was of course established in Kutaisi, Georgia already in 2006.

In cooperation with the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe ALDA organised a conference in Kutaisi last October, bringing together the Associations of Local Authorities from the three countries of Southern Caucasus with a view to furthering their cooperation. Such cooperation could help promote cooperation on the national level in the region and thereby contribute to more firmly rooted peace, stability and security on our continent.

Active citizenship remains – thanks to extensive support from the EU - one of the cornerstones of ALDA activities with our members and also wider a field. ALDA has even carried out training courses on the subject in Azerbaijan and Israel and we plan to extend this activity in the future,

lobbying to have all the countries of South Eastern Europe become eligible to participate in the EU programme: Europe for Citizens.

ALDA has continued and will continue to work closely with the Council of Europe and the Congress. The appointment of new Secretary Generals for both of these bodies gives fresh impetus to our relationship and cooperation with them.

For the past couple of years, ALDA has enjoyed structural support from European Commission against the background of our involvement in the programme Europe for Citizens. This support also carries responsibilities which we will have to fulfil in the coming years, but I am convinced that ALDA is in good shape to rise to the challenge of the next ten years.

This, however, should not lead to complacency. ALDA Staff and Board members are constantly searching for new partners/members as everywhere people and priorities change. On behalf of all of us involved in the daily running of the Association I want to thank wholeheartedly all those members and partners who support and encourage us to achieve more in terms of quality and quantity in meeting our objectives of promoting local democracy, good governance, rule of law and fundamental rights.

Last not least, I wish to congratulate all ALDA Staff under the leadership of Antonella Valmorbida as well as LDA Delegates and staff for the remarkable results generated in 2009, of which this annual report is a testimony.

Per Vinther  
President  


## Introduction by ALDA Director



Antonella Valmorbida,  
ALDA Director

The past year was both difficult and very motivating.

The substantial and articulated partnership with the European Commission, with its programmes and the Structured Dialogue on Active Citizenship gave a strong support to our organisation. We managed to bring to South Eastern Europe many activities of the programme Europe for Citizens and we are convinced that we are there operating both for peace and stability and for a future integration to the European Union. Our strong relationship with the Council of Europe (both the Congress and the Conference of the INGOs) helped us to plan and implement strategic programmes in Southern Caucasus and to work in the field of civil society participation in decision-making. Personally, I find the engagement in the Civil Society Forum for Eastern Partnership a very brilliant and motivating experience with a great political impact.

The other opportunity came from our 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary and from the fact that we are now a grown up organization that must fulfil its commitments and respond to its responsibility. We tried to address this with an enlarged and more

consolidated group of members from all over Europe composed of Local Governments and Civil Society. We also developed projects and ideas to put in practice our principle of a Europe from Below, where local governance between civil society and local authorities represents the milestone of stability and welfare. The Governing Board asked us to spread our horizons towards Southern Caucasus and some countries in the MED area for elaborating a new accompanying strategy of ALDA In ENPI Countries.

I also underline the strong involvement of ALDA with French partners and in particular the three years programme between region Basse Normandie and Republic of Macedonia and the promising decentralised cooperation programme between France and the Balkans.

A difficulty for us was the large coverage of our activities and members followed hopefully by our very motivated staff. And the departure of some experienced staff member provoked a natural reassessment of the roles and structure. Difficulties came also from the evident constrains that our partners are going through. Resources are limited and carefully spent. But, the most problematic issues is the depressing atmosphere all around which is often above the reality and facts. ALDA and all of us have the duty of being promoter of positive energy and dynamism to re-launch cooperation and exchanges, development and strategy for our new Europe. We still strongly think that Europe is a still a very special place, where we all struggle to live, decide together and understand each other, a possible model of democracy and balance of powers for the rest of the world. And despite the daily problems, we just know that development and respect for human rights can only go along with the a strong, motivated and engaged civil society and a functioning decentralised system.

Antonella Valmorbida  
Director



# **1. CHAPTER ONE: ALDA's activities**

## 1.1 The 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration of ALDA

On the 27 of May 2009, ALDA celebrated its 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with an event jointly promoted with the Committee of Regions. International keynote speaker attended such as Mr. Ian Micallef, President ad Interim of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities; M. Jean Marie Heydt, President Conference of INGOs; Mr Risto Raivio, Head of DGEAC, Europe for Citizens, Unit of the European Commission, Mr. Francesco JORI, Editorialist of the Espresso Group and Professor of Political Communication of the University of Padova (Italy).

ALDA staff, LDAs and ALDA members and partner came from all over Europe. It was a very nice chance to look at the 10 past years of intense work and to plan the upcoming years of the Association of Local Democracy Agencies.



Mr. Vinther (ALDA's President) with the Anniversary cake from Bydgoszcz Municipality (PL), Brussels



Waiting for the badge at the CoE in Brussels (Belgium), 10<sup>th</sup> ALDA Anniversary, the 27<sup>th</sup> of May 2009

# 1.2 The Role of the Association of Local Democracy Agencies in Local Governance and Active Citizenship in Europe

## Position Paper 2009-2011

### Introduction and achievements

With its Position Paper approved by the General Assembly held in Budapest in June 2006, the Association of Local Democracy Agencies (ALDA) established guidelines for the Association up to 2009:

- a. To support the enlargement of the European Union in South Eastern Europe based on the active participation of civil society and local authorities, with the support of the Local Democracy Agencies (LDA);
- b. To increase the role of the LDAs in local economic development in the region;
- c. To develop and further elaborate the methodology of multilateral decentralised cooperation of the LDAs;
- d. To develop and strengthen ALDA activities in the field of European Active Citizenship and Civic Participation;
- e. To open the LDA programme to other regions of Eastern Europe;
- f. To be of assistance to local authorities in building a Europe from below.

A lot happened in Europe and in South Eastern Europe, and consequently for ALDA as well, in these last three years and the present Position Paper is needed to assess and identify guidelines for the future activities, in a new perspective.

The objectives identified in the previous Position Paper were achieved as far as the commitments of ALDA and the LDAs are concerned. A substantial report of activities is now ready for the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of ALDA.

In South Eastern Europe, the enlargement of the European Union does not depend only on local actions and achievements. The process has suffered from some stops and goes in these last years. However, even if the political enlargement is not yet achieved, most of the countries of



The celebrations for the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of ALDA, Brussels (Belgium), May 2009

the region have signed the Stabilisation and Association Agreement with the EU. Croatia has reached an advanced level of accession negotiations and the process of joining will hopefully be finalized soon. Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and soon Albania are eligible for the EU funded programme "Europe for Citizens". Another

EU funded programme, the IPA programme (Instruments for Pre Accession) is now in place in the whole region and will support, from inside, the integration of the region into the European Union. However, despite these initiatives and their results, support to local authorities and civil society is still needed in order to reach the objectives, as will be described in the present Position Paper.

Since 2003, the programme of the LDAs in South Eastern Europe focused also on local economic development – with several programmes to support youth entrepreneurship, micro economic start up activities, self sustainable economy. The LDAs created – as a follow up of these regional programmes proposed by the ALDA, their own activities to support economic development..

The multilateral decentralised cooperation, which is the basis of the Local Democracy Agencies is now a well established methodology recognised in several European Fora. The process is comprising several projects to support in a long term perspective local democracy in areas where it needs to be strengthened further. A specific focus has developed in the field of local governance and good practices and methodologies of consultation and participation of civil society in the decision making process at the local level.

Over the last three years, ALDA has become one of the major actors in promoting European Active Citizenship focusing on the local dynamics between civil society and local authorities. Several projects have been implemented in Europe and in neighbouring countries. We have further developed methodologies and innovative instruments of consultation, trying to bridge the gap between the European Institutions and decision making process and the civil society. ALDA and its members have contributed to a better understanding of the objectives and instruments offered by the European Union and the Council of Europe to promote local democracy and civic participation. However, it has also proved to be a useful instrument of consultation of

citizens, raising the issues and the needs to be addressed to European Local authorities

The enlargement of the LDA network progressed with the opening of the first LDA in Georgia, now active and progressively more involved in the field of local democracy and civic participation. The development of a network in Southern Caucasus will be advanced with further actions in Azerbaijan and in Armenia. Moreover, in 2008, the opening of the LDA Albania finally completed the picture of our presence in South Eastern Europe. A number of pilot projects took place in Belarus and Russia and now contacts have been established for civil society and active citizenship participation in other countries and areas of Europe and even beyond.

The system established by the LDAs has worked and is still working. It is sustainable, manageable, light and efficient. It is based on the strength of a large number of experienced and committed people. The need of participation, involvement of citizens and cooperation with local authorities is in constant demand all over the world and the responses given by the European actors seem to lead the process in terms of capacities and models. ALDA and



**Speakers at the General Assembly in Brussels (Belgium), May 2009**

the LDAs tackle one of the most crucial challenges addressed at today's system of politics : how to make democracy efficient and respectful of human rights and diversity in a changing and complex world.

The Association has to face different challenges but has now the tools and experience to address them with full awareness and understanding of the tasks. Today, ALDA has proven itself capable of making a difference and changing people's life for the better.

## Objectives

The terms of the Position Paper have been identified during different brainstorming sessions of ALDA during its activities, with the staff and with the members. However, decisive was the Governing Board in Zaragoza, which reflected on the lines of action for the next few years, the objective being to consolidate the results achieved so far and to progress further in the direction of promotion of local democracy and governance and participation of civil society.

In the coming years the Association will address the development of local governance and civic participation as a major instrument for peace and development in Europe and in its neighbouring countries. The intention is with the present Position Paper to place ALDA at the forefront of this challenging task.

## Areas of activity

To achieve these objectives emphasis will be put on the following areas of activity:

- A. Support to the Local Democracy Agencies
- B. Conceptualisation of methodologies
- C. Development of activities in civic participation
- D. Pilot projects in local governance and civic participation
- E. Consolidate membership orientation and support to members

Cutting across these priority areas of activity ALDA will develop its strategy of communication, insufficient so far, among the elements of the network and towards the outside in order to gain further political and financial support and improve visibility in general.

### A. Support to the Local Democracy Agencies

The network of the Local Democracy Agencies shall be further consolidated. It will imply constant research and support to the partnership network. Each of the LDAs must respect the fundamental criteria for their existence such as partnership, programme and activities related to the main mission of promoting local democracy and citizens' participation and sustainability. There is a need to pay particular and constant attention to the assessment and the evaluation of the results achieved.

The methodology of the LDAs would continue to operate in South Eastern Europe to address the issues pending on decentralisation, citizens' participation, functioning of local authorities and strengthening of civil society.

In South Eastern Europe the LDAs offer a natural platform for the implementation of the IPA programmes and the continuing support for the integration of the countries of the region into the European Union.

It is among the priorities to develop and consolidate a network in Southern Caucasus and maybe further elaborate a precise model of multilateral decentralised cooperation in that region, which would be different yet incorporate essential and proven elements of the model followed in South Eastern Europe.

The further enlargement of the network of the Local Democracy Agencies must correspond to a capacity to carry out quality actions and to follow the different programmes and processes proposed. The possibility of "exporting" the

LDA concept to other areas where decentralised cooperation is already an instrument of international cooperation (such as the Magreb countries and the Middle East) is currently under evaluation and could be implemented gradually, based upon clear conditions.

The Local Democracy Agencies would support the programme and development of the programme “Europe for Citizens” in the region by addressing the support and strengthening of civil society and the twinning opportunities.

In the context of the programme of the Council of Europe, in coordination with the different programmes dedicated to Active Citizenship, the LDAs could implement the strategies proposed and coordinated with the Council of Europe regarding local democracy and civil society groups.

The present network of LDAs.



## B. Conceptualisation of methodologies for the LDAs

The LDAs have developed a certain experience and would need now to find an assessment procedure and way to improve not only qualitatively their activities but also how they could reach wider target groups. They would help the entire Association to identify best practices in citizens’ participation and to implement new and innovative ways of consultation of citizens.

A specific effort will be deployed towards identifying the best way to improve LDA and ALDA activities in terms of efficiency and sustainability.

## C. Development of activities in civic participation

ALDA will be strongly involved in the future in implementing activities on Active Citizenship and citizens’ participation in particular in the cooperation between civil society and local authorities, by:

- Collecting and taking stock of the best practices in this field and establishing models and replicable concepts;
- Identifying with partners and members the most efficient and innovative way of consultation through different methodologies such as
  - the module on active citizenship
  - European Active Citizenship dedicated to the rights and duties of every citizen in Europe (with a specific focus on immigration issue)
  - the citizens’ panels
  - the promotion of voluntarism and participation.
- Providing a constant interface between the LDAs and the members and the European institutions working in this field in order to create a better dialogue between citizens and the European Union decision making process.

## D. Pilot projects in local governance and civic participation

With its background and experience, ALDA could propose to offer support and assistance to pilot projects in the area of citizens' participation and local democracy, involving local authorities. Pilot projects in areas of Europe, which are not a first priority of ALDA, would also stimulate the interest and new ideas among partners and members. It would also feed the methodological aspect and pave the way for new contacts. It could regard and focus on Eastern European countries, the Middle East and the Magreb countries.

In this case, ALDA could support technical assistance and share methods and consultancy approaches.

## E. Consolidate membership orientation and support to members

More than ever, ALDA could be considered a membership oriented organisation. The strong involvement of the members, the decision making with their participation, the forum proposed, is a special asset of the Association.

Therefore, the activities will be further directed at informing and including the members in our activities. The membership network should be further developed and diversified keeping in mind the fundamental importance of a balance between local authorities and civil society groups from all over Europe.

The membership drive should be further intensified in countries of Europe under-represented now, in order to have them included to the largest possible extent in ALDA activities and decision making.

In this task, ALDA would further develop:

- thematic working groups offering the opportunity to study in detail the concepts, tasks and leadership
- country meetings with members



The hall of ALDA's General Assembly at Committee of the Regions in Brussels (Belgium), May 2009

- regular communication with the members
- services and technical assistance.

## Conclusion

This brief Position Paper is meant to be a strategic tool for the development of ALDA, the LDAs and their activities in the next three years. It will remain work in progress allowing necessary revision in the light of results and external developments.

Against this background the overall objective of the Association shall be to firmly support the principle that citizens' participation stay at the basis of political culture of Europe. In these difficult times, affected by the global crisis and by a new definition of the values of the European project, ALDA remains convinced of the need to work on the European identity also through the involvement of citizens in the decision making process.

## 1.3 Enlargement of ALDA

Historically, ALDA has been focusing on the region of the Western Balkans and the territories of the European Union member states. Later, in line with the new political developments in the field of strengthening links between the European Union and its neighbourhood, following the desire of its members, in the period 2004-2006, ALDA has extended its reach to the region of South Caucasus.

### Growing process that needs to be accompanied and piloted

In the last few years, the level of activities as well as the reputation and credibility of ALDA have increased a lot and they are readily recognised in international *fora* and also at the local level where we work. We can understand it by the fact that ALDA is not only considered as a supporting project of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe but it is a real network and organisation in its own right, with its own policy and dynamics. Another evidence of its strength is the constant growing consideration afforded us by other international stakeholders, first among them the different institutions of the European Union.

The European Commission has recognised ALDA as one of the main organisations in Europe dealing with active citizenship and local governance. This is visible in the constant and growing funding for our organisation but also in the fact that we are consulted on policy issues (like the Structured Dialogue of the *Europe for Citizens* programme). We also have a role in the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum. Furthermore, the process of Enlargement of the EU towards SEE is looking for reliable partners in the Civil Society sector and ALDA is among them (our assessment on the European for Citizens programme in Croatia, Macedonia and Albania will be presented in the next Structured Dialogue

in January). We are now a recognised and visible partner also of the Committee of the Regions, in particular in this growing process like the Eastern Partnership. The LDAs locally have also grown up and they are now seen and actively involved as supporting programmes for civil society and local democracy. ALDA managed in these 10 years to create an organised and focused network out a group of Agencies who were almost independent and non-coherent one towards the others. The networking on projects and policies are more and more evident.

These changes are the result of the growth of ALDA. On the other hand, they are also the stimulus for further steps, which can bring us forward. ALDA is a very vivid organisation and – because of its structure and the means for its existence – project oriented. In ALDA's case, the projects' dynamics is compensated by an also very active life of the Association and participation of members who are all engaged in projects, activities, exchanges and meetings. This growing feeling of success and participation is only possible if there is a sense that growth and better work is at stake.

### ALDA wants to respond to the expectations

ALDA wants to respond to this expectation by taking the necessary steps to reach the objectives ahead of us : using the methodology of the Local Democracy Agencies and their experience in local governance and citizens participation all over Europe and possibly in the ENP region.

### The cross cutting importance of local governance in development and stability

One can also understand the reason for the strength of ALDA and the LDAs' methodology through the fact that local governance seems to be the key for development – or exit of economic crisis – and stabilisation and democratisation. Wherever we look, through every guideline and policy paper, the question of how to make the local level of gover-

nance work and interact with civil society is expressed as one of the means for change.

Not only that. ALDA and the LDAs experience every day the importance of the work at the local level, the progresses made in the community – in the medium term – of the improvement of local government and its cooperation with civil society. We are able to demonstrate that what we do produces a change. In a word, we just do the right things at the right moment. The main topics of ALDA and LDAs seem to be requested, needed, used as essential and cross cutting element for development and stability. This means, that it is possible to look at a positive development of our activities.

Our experience tells us that it is also essential to develop further our methodology of action and see it recognised in different fora (in the EU, UNDP and other contexts working in local governance).

## More LDAs

At the moment there are 11 active LDAs and 1 is in process of relaunch. Looking ahead, it seems possible thanks to an enlargement in Southern Caucasus, to open one LDA

in Armenia and one in Azerbaijan. Probably, the project of Basse Normandie/Macedonia, will provide the basis for opening an LDA in Macedonia again, soon, which would make a total of 16 LDAs.

## More areas to be covered

At this moment, ALDA is collecting relevant information with a view to opening LDAs in the remaining two countries of the South Caucasus – Armenia and Azerbaijan, as well as to reinforcing its network of LDAs in the Western Balkans and Georgia. Currently, on the basis of discussions in the Governing Board in 2008, the Association, is looking to fully cover the European Neighbourhood Policy (hereinafter ENP) countries and extend its engagement to the area of the Southern Mediterranean, through the development of projects in cooperation with local authorities and civil society organisations in these regions.

In this direction, ALDA pursues the objectives of its initiator (the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe) and members who are seeking to develop throughout Europe and its neighbourhood, common and democratic principles of crucial importance for the fulfilment of its mission of developing democracy at the local and regional level. This endeavour goes hand in hand with strengthening the interaction between local authorities and civil society organisations/citizens, always having in mind as a final goal continuous progress in the democratisation of Europe itself and of its neighbourhood.

## The Role of the Association of Local Democracy Agencies outside the European Union

ALDA's commitment to the European neighbourhood is twofold. Primarily, it derives from a genuine desire of its members to help the democratisation processes in the countries of involvement. Simultaneously, it comes from the realisation that the development and strengthening



Participants of ALDA's General Assembly 2009, Committee of the Regions, Brussels (Belgium), May 2009

of the European core, both in the political and economic sense, to a large extent depends on the state of democracy in its neighbourhood. It is in this way that ALDA's work in the countries surrounding the European Union, perfectly fits the overall objectives of the European Union and of the Council of Europe, expressed through the former's ENP in general, and Eastern Partnership and the Union for the Mediterranean in particular.

Beyond reinforcing the feeling of belonging to Europe within the European Union, rendering tangible the meaning of European Citizenship to the citizens of Europe through the active citizenship training, ALDA also endeavours to make concrete the notion of "Europe" and Democracy (with special attention to local democracy development) to the citizens who are not part of it. ALDA not



ALDA's 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration and General Assembly at the COR, Brussels (Belgium), May 2009

only embodies the shared European values, but also seeks to demonstrate to Europe's neighbourhood that Europe is not only an abstract concept, but is also a concrete reality, source of innovation and opportunities and that, to put it simply, the democratisation process starts at the local level.

The process of co-development remains central to the Association's mission.

ALDA links Western, Eastern and Central Europe through its wide network of partners. This network helps local authorities or civil society organisations to engage with each other if they have subjects of interests in common despite the geographical distance.

The Local Democracy Agencies and their method of multilateral decentralized cooperation is a very good example of this. The international partners are there to exchange their knowledge, best practices and know-how with the local agency and local host municipality, but also between themselves.

Why is the role of ALDA in the countries that are not part of the European Union so important? Being at the frontiers of Europe, these states are of utmost political and economic importance to the European Union. A crisis in its neighbourhood almost automatically affects the political developments within the Union. However, ALDA's engagement in the European neighbourhood is not necessarily linked with the respective country's European membership perspective.

Some of the countries where ALDA is traditionally involved (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and UNMIK/Kosovo) are covered by the EU's Stabilisation and Association Process and have thus started the necessary steps to join the Union. Others are hoping to enter the Union in a longer-term perspective (like for example Georgia) even though for the moment a clear membership perspective remains beyond the horizon.

ALDA addresses even those countries that are not necessarily wishing to become part of this supernational body, but their geographical location makes it important for them to have good relations with the EU as a key factor facilitating the stability and development of the country.

## Giving an institutional framework to ALDA's actions in the ENPI region and Russia

ALDA's engagement in the region beyond Western Balkans and the South Caucasus, namely the Southern Mediterranean (the Magreb countries, Israel, Jordan etc.) and Eastern Europe (Belarus, Moldova, Russia, Ukraine, etc.) is progressing at different speeds depending on the countries and local context. Yet, there is a sense in which engagement in projects only, does not provide the opportunity to assure a steady follow-up to the actions implemented within the scope of these projects. The need for a more formalised framework for ALDA's partnership with local actors (municipalities and civil society organisations), through the establishment of an LDA, need to be carefully evaluated, however should not be excluded.

Indeed, according to what is described above, following political decisions of the Governing Board, future steps in LDAs setting up, could be considered. Meanwhile, two projects in the Med countries have been granted : UNDP Algeria (with City of Lecce, Coppem and the Region Sicily and two Algerian partners) and City of Aix and Oudja (Marocco), assistance for citizens' negotiation.

An attention could be also given to the integration of Turkey with specific actions.

## Final words

Is therefore the intention to continue the enlargement of the LDAs network. The development of the LDAs would need careful reorganization of the internal management and staff and a possible diversification (or further specialization) of the staff by region of interest.

This is a road map proposed towards enlargement:

- In particular, it is of fundamental importance to relaunch the **LDA Kosovo**, first (by February 2010). This specific LDA is of paramount importance and the need of the

local authorities and civil society are to be supported by the Association. Moreover, we have received the support for the relaunch (DGAP congress and Switzerland). In this case no own resources of ALDA requested because the initial resources are assured by the projects.

- A new **LDA in Southern Caucasus** should be also finalized in **2010-2011** (either in Azerbaijan or in Armenia). In this case, we are expecting the funds from Liechtenstein. In case the funds are not secured, we could think of allocate 15.000 Euro from the ALDA budget to finalize the initial phase for launching this second LDA in Azerbaijan in 2010-2011.
- Further evaluation for a third **LDA in Southern Caucasus** should be planned in 2010 and possibly finalized in 2011.
- In 2010, it is proposed to evaluate a development in other countries of Eastern Europe like **Ukraine, Moldova** in the following years.
- In the next couple of years, it will be necessary also to identify an exit strategy for the SEE countries, and in particular Croatia. The LDAs need to plan what will be their future and need to receive clear indications from the Governing Board.
- The assessment of the LDA network in the Med countries was supposed to be organised in 2009 but could not take place. The event will take place in 2010.

## The objectives to be reached, will then be in 2010:

- Relaunch of the LDA Kosovo
- Planning LDA Azerbaijan or Armenia and possibly opening
- Plan for the LDA Macedonia
- Identification of exit strategy for the LDAs in Croatia
- Operational strategy for other East European Countries
- Operational strategy for the Med countries (and Turkey)
- Development of methodological approach

## 1.4 ALDA as international stakeholder

During the past years ALDA was very active in position itself as a relevant international stakeholder in many platform and networks. Its role was strongly consolidated in 2009 thanks also to several meeting where ALDA attended with active commitment and participation.

Here below are the main meeting of ALDA staff members, Governing board representatives participated:

- Mission in Israel, 23/28<sup>th</sup> of February 2009
- BIT Milano, stand Regione Puglia, 19<sup>th</sup> of February
- Meeting in Thiene , 20<sup>th</sup> of February
- UNDP Art Gold, Geneva, 26/02/09, with Region Auvergne
- Black Sea conference , 2<sup>nd</sup> of March, Brussels
- Intercultural Cities in Strasbourg , 3<sup>rd</sup> of March 2009
- Meeting with VINE, project in SEE, agency of Region Veneto, in Vicenza, 9<sup>th</sup> of March 2009
- Meeting DGEAC, Structured dialogue Europe for Citizens, 10<sup>th</sup> of March 2009
- Meeting with the EC in Milano , 11<sup>th</sup> of March 2009
- 12 March– Bruxelles – Rencontre avec Marc Thoulén, Association des villes Bruxelloises
- Meeting Association Alexander Langer in Strasbourg, Hosted by ALDA and the Council of Europe, 9<sup>th</sup> of March 2009
- Balkan Festival, Brussels, 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> of April 2009
- Conference INGO, Moscow, 20<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup> of April 2009
- Meeting with Trieste, 22<sup>nd</sup> of April 2009
- NGO legislation expert groups, Moscow, April 2009
- Meeting with French Embassy in Russia for decentralised cooperation activities when April 2009
- Participation to the Session of the conference of the IONG – Council of Europe 27<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> of April 2009
- Congress Session in Strasbourg, 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> of March 2009
- European Local Democracy Week steering committee, 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> of April 2009 in Strasbourg,
- Cités Unies France, Meeting Group Serbia, 20<sup>th</sup> of April 2009
- Meeting CEMR and ALDA in Sarajevo, Twinning activities, 27<sup>th</sup> of March 2009, Rhone Alpes Region, Contact for Armenia
- Meeting Polesella, Active citizenship, 18<sup>th</sup> of May 2009
- Meeting with Province of Vicenza, 30<sup>th</sup> of April 2009
- Mission Maroc with Aix en Provence, technical assistance, 4/7 – 05-2009
- Committee of the Regions, Preparation of the Workshop in the Open days
- Registration as lobbyies at the EC
- Valencia, Meeting with region, 14<sup>th</sup> of May 2009
- Conference on Eastern Partnership, Brussels, 27<sup>th</sup> of May 2009
- Meeting with Sergio Bassoli, Solidar, 27<sup>th</sup> of May 2009
- Per Vinther, CoR event on Eastner partnership, Kosice, 3<sup>rd</sup> of June 2009
- Country meeting Lithuania, 5<sup>th</sup> of June 2009
- Structured dialogue, DGEAC, 11<sup>th</sup> of June 2009
- Meeting representatives of Baden Wurtenberg, in Brussels, 11 of June 2009
- Meeting on the Eastern Partnership on the 16<sup>th</sup> of June, Committee of the Regions
- Anti corruption course in Istanbul with FPDL, 18<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> of June 2009
- Meeting in Puglia, IPA and ENPI, 15<sup>th</sup> of June 2009
- Meeting Mme Levieux, Ville de Paris, 23<sup>rd</sup> of June 2009

- Conference on Enlargement in Belgrade, 19<sup>th</sup> of June 2009
- Meeting with Belarusian group, INGO conference, 24<sup>th</sup> of June 2009
- Coordination France Bosnie, Clermond Ferrand, 25<sup>th</sup> of June 2009
- INGO, Forum on the future of Democracy, Strasbourg, 26<sup>th</sup> of June 2009
- Meeting with Trento, city, 1<sup>st</sup> of July 2009
- Preparation Forum for the Future of Democracy, preparation of the candidates
- Meeting Sicilian Region for conference on Mediterrean strategy, 3<sup>rd</sup> of July, 2009,

- Eastern Partnership Brussels, at CoR, 14<sup>th</sup> of July 2009
- Participation in the publication of the European Year of Volunteering campaign
- European week on local democracy, circulation to members and website
- Meeting with the European Commission, DGEAC, Risto Raivio and Cecile Leclerc, 23 July 2009
- Meeting with Paolo Raffone, CIPI, 23 juillet 2009
- Meeting François Friederich, DGAP COE, Vicenza, 26 August 2009 – School of Political Studies
- Meeting with Rovigo, membership, 2<sup>nd</sup> of September 2009
- Meeting with Portogruaro, follow up Master on Balkans, 2<sup>nd</sup> of September 2009
- Tours, Rencontre AFFCRE, Jumellages, 11/12 September 2009
- 15<sup>th</sup> of September, meeting with Notarangelo, Regione Puglia
- Political Schools Azerbaijan and Armenia, Budapest COE centre, 19/20<sup>th</sup> of September 2009,
- Rimini for initiatives on Civil Society, 24<sup>th</sup> of September 2009
- L'Acquila e Valle Roveto, 24<sup>th</sup> of September
- INGO conference, 28-30 September 2009
- Rencontre MAE France, Koetscher, 27 September 2009
- Meeting France and Serbia, Belgrade 28/28<sup>th</sup> of September 2009
- Meeting with Ambassador Osplet, Liechtenstein, 30<sup>th</sup> of September for project Azerbaijan
- Meeting with Ambassador Busetto, Italy for project Azerbaijan, 30<sup>th</sup> of September 2009
- Meeting with Carver, representative USA at COE, 30<sup>th</sup> of September 2009
- Meeting with UNDP, 6<sup>th</sup> of October 2009



The European Parliament building in Strasbourg (France)

- Meeting with ZELS in Macedonia for Project Basse Normandie and Active Citizenship, 8<sup>th</sup> of July 2009
- Participation at the Exit festival, Novi Sad, 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> of July 2009
- Meeting with Studiorum Macedonia, 8<sup>th</sup> of July 2009, in Skopje
- Slovenia, Youth Salto Europe, 13<sup>th</sup> of July 2009

- Codess: meeting in Mestre, 17<sup>th</sup> of July 2009
- Open Days, in Bruxelles, 7/9 October 2009
- Energetic.it, Rome, 8<sup>th</sup> of October 2009
- Meeting Commission Culture at the city of Vicenza, 12<sup>th</sup> of October 2009
- Congress Plenary, Stand, 13/15<sup>th</sup> of October 2009
- Local Democracy Week, 12<sup>th</sup>/16<sup>th</sup> of October 2009, Conference with the city of Strasbourg, 12<sup>th</sup> of October 2009
- Meeting with finances, Council of Europe, 14<sup>th</sup> of October 2009
- Rencontre avec Kingsheim, Strasbourg, 14<sup>th</sup> of October 2009
- Meeting with Ospelt, ambassador Liechtenstein, for Azerbaijan, 15<sup>th</sup> of October 2009
- Eurocities, meeting in Strasbourg, 15<sup>th</sup> of October 2009
- Presentation with the City of Strasbourg with the Local Democracy Week, 15<sup>th</sup> of October 2009 on transborder cooperation
- Meeting in Vojvodina, 13<sup>th</sup> October 2009
- Meeting for projects FP7, 16<sup>th</sup> of October 2009
- Workshop on Citizens participation within the EU, organised by Pour la Solidarité, 16<sup>th</sup> of October 2009
- Zadar, Eacas meeting, 20<sup>th</sup> of October 2009
- Structured dialogue, EC, 20<sup>th</sup> of October 2009
- Meeting with Dalla Pozza, Province of Vicenza, 19<sup>th</sup> of October 2009
- Meeting in Kiev, forum for the future of democracy, electoral systems, 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>th</sup> of October, as chair of the committee on democracy and civil society of conference of the INGOs
- St. Petersburg, 20/22 October 2009, Assise France/Russie
- Meljnik, Ukraine, for contacts 24<sup>th</sup> of October 2009
- Preparation semaine de la démocratie Locale with Association des villes de Bruxelles OK
- Meeting Afccre and CUF in Paris, 10/11/09
- Meeting with Cidem and European Civic Forum, Paris 10<sup>th</sup> of November 2009
- Conference participation in Lubljana conference of International NGOs, 12<sup>th</sup> of Nov 2009
- Meeting with Intesa San Paolo, 21 October 2009
- Il Lung 89, Trento 14<sup>th</sup> of November 2009
- Eastern Partnership civil society forum, 16/17<sup>th</sup> of November 2009, Brussels,
- Salto Med in Malta, 19/21<sup>st</sup> of Nov 2009
- Youth programme in Budapest on End of Berlin Wall 20<sup>th</sup> of November. 2009
- Consultation White book of the CoR on Multilevel governance
- Nalas General Assembly, 11<sup>th</sup> of Dec 2009
- Participation to the UNDP Governance Forum in Siviglia 26/27 Nov
- General Assembly ARE Belfort
- Rencontre Marc Thoulen, villes de la region de Bruxelles, 2 December
- Forum civic européen 4 December
- European Forum for Urban Safety, 3 December Budapest
- Programme immigration Bologna – 4<sup>th</sup> of December 2009
- Alliance volontaire, 2 December 2009
- FP7 programme, meeting in Venice 3<sup>rd</sup> of December 2009
- Med Cities for intercultural dialogue, 11<sup>th</sup> of December
- Consultation NGOs neighbouring countries, Brussels, 14<sup>th</sup> of Dec 2009
- Meeting Friends of Europe, in Brussels, 8<sup>th</sup> of December 2009
- Forum Europe for Citizens, Brussels, 16<sup>th</sup> December 2009
- Alliance for voluntarism, 17<sup>th</sup> of December 2009
- Meeting with Association of Norwegian Municipalities for the follow up, 15<sup>th</sup> of December 2009

## 1.5 ALDA working in networks

- Member of the network: **Working Together** (coordinated by FPD Romania), [www.fpd.ro](http://www.fpd.ro) (trainers for local authorities in all Eastern Europe)
  - Partner of the **UCLG** United Cities and Local Government as for decentralisation issues [www.cities-localgovernments.org](http://www.cities-localgovernments.org)
  - Observer at the **Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe**
  - Member of the **Structured Dialogue of the European Commission on Active Citizenship programme**
  - Member of the **Conference of the International Non Governmental Organisations** of the Council of Europe [www.coe.int](http://www.coe.int) and Chair (Antonella Valmorbida) of the Commission Civil Society and Democracy
- Strategic partner of the **Regional Cooperation Council for South Eastern Europe**
  - Member of the **European Civic Forum**
  - Member of the **Civil Society Forum for Eastern Partnership**, (Antonella Valmorbida) Elected member of the Steering Committee
  - Regular contributor to the Policies of the **Committee of Regions** on Citizens' participation and governance
  - Member of the **Alliance** organizing the European Year of Voluntarism



The Congress hall of the European Parliament in Strasbourg (France)

## 1.6 ALDA members in 2009

### MUNICIPALITIES

#### Albania

Shkodra Municipality

#### Bosnia and Herzegovina

Prijedor Municipality

Zavidovici Municipality

#### Croatia

Osijek Municipality

Sisak Municipality

Verteneglio Municipality

Zagreb Municipality

#### Denmark

Odense Municipality

Vejle Municipality

#### France

Kingersheim Municipality

Nevers Municipality

Strasbourg Municipality

Sainte Foy Lés Lyon Municipality

#### Italy

Bari Municipality

Borgo Valsugana Municipality

Brindisi Municipality

Erchie Municipality

Lainate Municipality

Lavis Municipality

Lecce Municipality

Monfalcone Municipality

Porto Cesareo Municipality

Portogruaro Municipality

Preganziol Municipality

Ravenna Municipality

Reggio Emilia Municipality

Rimini Municipality

Russi Municipality

Schio Municipality

Thiene Municipality

Trento Municipality

Trieste Municipality

Vicenza Municipality

#### Norway

Levanger Municipality

Saltdal Municipality

Sund Municipality

Vefsen Municipality

#### Poland

Bydgoszcz Municipality

#### Rumania

Oradea Municipality

#### Serbia

Kragujevac Municipality

Nis Municipality

Subotica Municipality

#### Switzerland

Bellinzona Municipality

Lausanne Municipality

Lugano Municipality

Neuchâtel Municipality

Yverdon-les-Bains Municipality

#### UK

Walsall Municipality

Wolverhampton Municipality

## PROVINCES OR COUNTIES

### Italy

- Bari Province
- Milano Province
- Trento Autonomous Province
- Vicenza Province

### Rumania

- Prahova County

### Spain

- Barcelona County

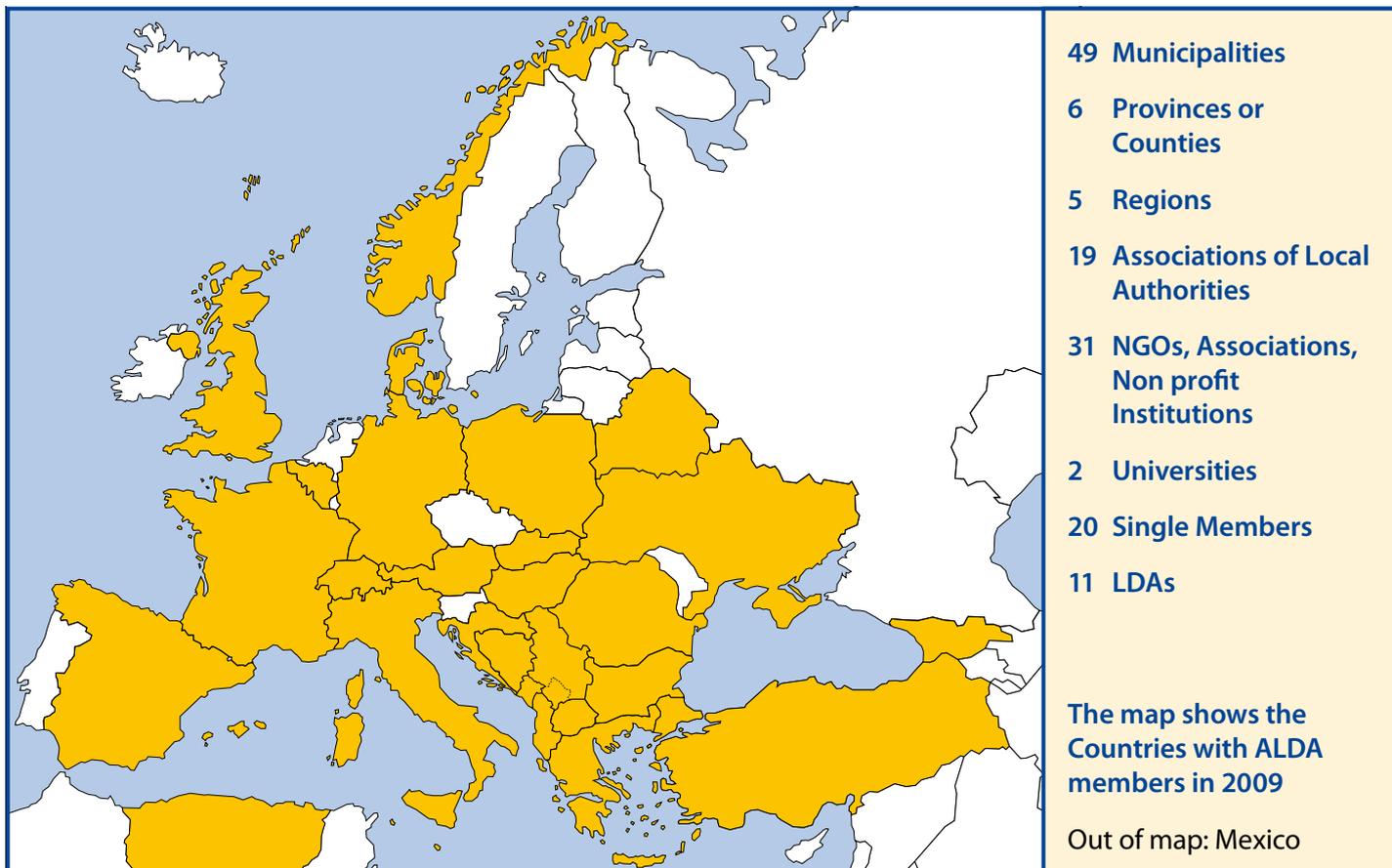
## REGIONS

### Croatia

- Istria Region

### Italy

- Friuli Venezia Giulia Region
- Puglia Region
- Sicily Region
- Veneto Region



## ASSOCIATIONS OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES

### Belgium

ARE  
CCRE

### France

AFCCRE  
ENTO

### Denmark

Local Government Denmark

### Italy

AICCRE  
Associazione dei Comuni della Marca Trevigiana  
Consorzio dei Comuni trentini  
CONSVIPO  
Tecla

### Malta

Local Councils Association

### Norway

Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities

### Poland

Douzelage association  
Warmia and Mazuria Communitas Association

### Republic of Macedonia

NALAS Secretariat  
ZELS

### Rumania

AMR

### Serbia

Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities

### Switzerland

Causes Communes Suisse

## NGOS, ASSOCIATIONS, NON PROFIT INSTITUTIONS

### Albania

Horizont NGO

### Algeria

FACM

### Austria

Europazentrum Wien (EZW)

### Belarus

Lev Sapieha Foundation

### Bulgaria

Association for European Partnership - AEP  
Balkan Assist Association  
National Forum API

### France

ALFA Formation  
CIDEFE  
Maison de l'Europe

### Greece

AKRO NGO  
Institute of Entrepreneurship Development  
KMOP (Kendro Merimnas Oikoyenias kai Pediou)

### Hungary

NeTe, Centre Internationale de Formation Européenne

### Italy

Associazione per l'Ambasciata della Democrazia Locale  
Associazione Progetto Prijedor  
Fondazione Opera Campana dei Caduti  
Identità e Dialogo  
IPRES  
Istituto Euromediterraneo  
Progettarte  
Putignanonelmondo  
Solo Uguali Diritti  
Tavolo Trentino con Kraljevo

## **Mexico**

INICIA

## **Republic of Macedonia**

CRPRC, Centre for Regional Policy Research  
and Cooperation Studiorum

## **Slovakia**

Professional Women - Zeny

## **Switzerland**

Causes Communes Ticino

## **UK**

LGIB - Local Government International Bureau

## **UK - South Wales**

Newport Kutaisi Association

## **Ukraine**

Ukrainian Agency for Democracy and Local  
Self-Government

## **UNIVERSITIES**

### **Italy**

IUAV Venezia University  
Padova University

## **SINGLE MEMBERS**

### **Belgium**

Van Damme Lukas  
Vinther Per

### **France**

Affholder Sylvie  
Beck Colette  
Bohner Ulrich  
Fouconnier Alain  
Friederich François  
Locatelli Rinaldo  
Vulcano Luigi

## **Germany**

Schley Michael

## **Italy**

Bottacin Diego  
Cuonzo Maria Teresa  
Martini Gianfranco  
Rizzo Sebastiano

## **Serbia**

Kern Imre

## **Spain**

Fischer Dorothee

## **UK**

Boorer Malcom  
Master Owen

## **UK, Wales**

Mayer David

## **Ukraine**

Zaychykova Vitalina

## **LDAs**

### **Albania**

LDA Albania

### **Bosnia and Herzegovina**

LDA Prijedor  
LDA Zavidovici  
LDA Mostar

### **Croatia**

LDA Osijek  
LDA Sisak  
LDA Verteneglio

### **Georgia**

LDA Georgia

### **Montenegro**

LDA Montenegro

**Serbia**

LDA Center South Serbia  
LDA Subotica

**ALDA MEMBERS WHO JOINED IN 2010****France**

Brischoux Maud (single member)  
Lower Normandie Region  
Auvergne Region  
Zehra Dreca Sikias (single member)

**Italy**

Franco Lara (single member)  
Isbem  
Rovigo Municipality  
Unisco

**Greece**

Patras

**Kosovo**

Association of Municipalities of Kosovo

**Republic of Macedonia**

Sega  
Skopje Municipality



European youths: one of the main targets of ALDA's political strategies

## **1.7 ALDA'S PROJECTS IN 2009**

## Projects on Active Citizenship

### 1.7.1 Pilot trainings on Active Citizenship

Nowadays, while the EU is experiencing a constant evolution and new challenges, **ALDA believes that European citizens have a key and primary role in building Europe.** For this reason, ALDA has been promoting and implementing projects, actions and debates regarding the future of Europe, the necessity to get Europe closer to its citizens and the importance of a wider involvement of citizens in the life of the community, both at the local and at the European level, with the aim to promote good governance throughout Europe. There is also a need of further thinking over the concept of European active citizenship and it is important to develop new instruments and innovative “tools” to promote citizens’ participation, at all levels, in the construction of the future Europe. Thus, ALDA addresses these European priorities through the promotion of a **pilot training action** which is supported by the European Commission and involves the main actors appointed to the development of the themes connected to citizenship, participation and democracy: local authorities and civil society organizations. The interest for the development of a pilot training action on the topic of active citizenship may also be defined as a “natural” step for ALDA, which is now committed, after more than a decade of field-work, to “transfer” its knowledge based on its experiences. The pilot training **aims at strengthening knowledge and skills of local authorities and civil society organizations** which are interested in the topic of active citizenship and in the European citizenship in particular. Nowadays, local authorities and civil society play a key role both at the European and at the local level: it is therefore necessary and crucial to get ready for this challenge in order to be better equipped as local actors in the development of

active citizenship. The cooperation between local authorities and civil society allows the growths of synergies and the promotion of “multiplier effects” which ensure a remarkable impetus for the local community, for its development and for the setting up of participative and democratic processes.

The pilot trainings were implemented with the following partners:

- Comune di Russi, Italy ([www.comune.russi.ra.it](http://www.comune.russi.ra.it))
- Buon Samaritano, Campobasso, Italy ([www.buonsamaritano.org](http://www.buonsamaritano.org))
- ASAEL, Spain ([www.asael.es](http://www.asael.es))
- Municipal Training Center, Kaunas, Lithuania ([www.savi-valda.lt](http://www.savi-valda.lt))
- National Forum API, Bulgaria ([www.apiplovdiv.tripod.com](http://www.apiplovdiv.tripod.com))
- LDA Osijek, Croatia ([www.lda-osijek.hr](http://www.lda-osijek.hr))
- CRPRC Studiorum, Macedonia ([www.studiorum.org.mk](http://www.studiorum.org.mk))
- NGO Horizont, Albania
- DIUC, Azerbaijan

The pilot trainings were very successful and the partner expressed the intention to reiterate the initiative in the following year.



Participants attending the Module on Active Citizenship in Russi (Italy), February 2009

## Projects on Active Citizenship

### 1.7.2 “Training for active citizenship in the EU enlargement process” (TACEP)

**Supported by:** European Commission (DG EAC, Europe for Citizens Programme)

**Local partners:** Croatia: LDA Verteneglio, LDA Sisak; LDA Osijek

**International Partners:** in Hungary: PRONI Osijek Baranya Ifjúságáért Nonprofit Kft – Pecz, Europe Direct Information Network Info Point Europe of Baranya County – Pez, Nemezetcozi Segetreg er Baratsag Egyesulet- Pecz, in Italy: Going to Europe, Modena

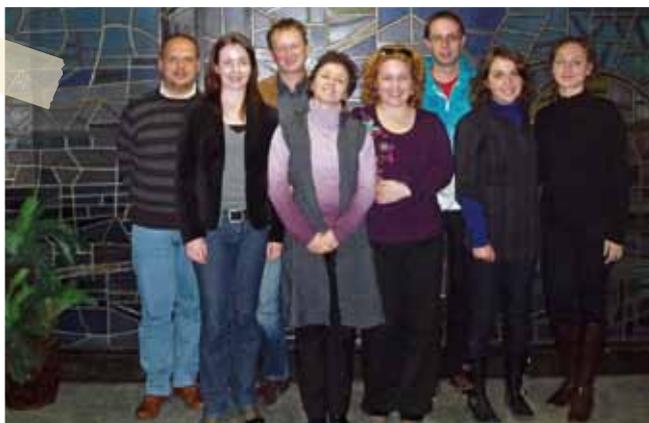
The Association of Local Democracy Agencies (ALDA) was the coordinating organization of this project and involved, as regional coordinators and implementing units, the three Croatian Local Democracy Agencies (LDAs) based in Verteneglio, Sisak and Osijek (Croatia) which are active on citizens' participation and European integration.

The project was implemented between September 2008 and June 2009 and focused especially on the need to provide capacity building to Croatian civil society organizations in the context of the EU Enlargement Process, taking into consideration the candidate status of Croatia. The objectives of the project were to train Croatian citizens and civil society organizations to act as “multipliers” at the local level in the field of active citizenship. This project aimed also at promoting partnerships both at the European and

at the local level in the field of active citizenship. The core activity consisted in two seminars, based on the concept of informal learning, in each of the three communities, titled “Trainings of Multipliers”. They were organized in Croatia: in Osijek on the 5-8<sup>th</sup> March 2009 and 20-22<sup>nd</sup> March 2009, in Sisak on the 26-29<sup>th</sup> March 2009 and 17-19<sup>th</sup> April 2009 and in Verteneglio on the 2-5<sup>th</sup> April 2009 and 8-10<sup>th</sup> May 2009. The active and interactive method allowed participants to learn not only from theories but also from practical examples. In particular, participants developed their knowledge and competences on “Europe for Citizens” programme, on active European citizenship participatory issues, on intercultural issues on running and evaluating multiplying projects.

As a follow-up of the trainings, on the 9<sup>th</sup> May 2009, celebrating the Day of Europe, three Info Point “Europe for Citizens” were opened in the three LDAs, to increase the visibility of the project and its sustainable base for future cooperation at the local level as well as for the development of future joint projects.

It is worth mentioning especially the “pilot” cooperation between the participating organisations. A concrete follow up came from Verteneglio (Croatia): a young female multiplier, together with other young people, nowadays are promoting the set up of Youth Councils in some municipalities of Istria Region (Croatia), where this kind of advisory body was still missing despite a law dated 2008. Together with the support of the LDA Verteneglio, she organized meetings with the international partner youth NGO “Exist” (Italy), and collected some local young people to participate to activities organized in Italy by the NGO. The active role of local youth it is a clear sign that through informal and non-formal learning, they gained competences, which enabled them to develop their commitment to active and democratic participation. Volunteering is indeed an essential element of active citizenship and the young multipliers are in fact offering their spare time for the benefit of their community.



Participants at the 1<sup>st</sup> Steering Committee of TACEP, Sisak (Croatia), November 2009

mentation. The project was successful since it contributed to create a new space of democracy in Croatia, through the debate on the active involvement of citizens in the social and political life, and in particular the enlargement process.

The Celebration of Europe Day in Sisak may also be seen as a joint project of local NGOs developed as a follow-up of the training session: it was a pilot cooperation between 6 NGOs in 3 towns, Sisak, Petrinja and Gvozd, in which the celebration of the 9th of May offered an opportunity for citizens to receive information and answers about the EU integration.

An important outcome of the project is the trans-nationality, which was achieved through the cooperation with international partners, mainly Italian and Hungarian, who invited few young multipliers to join them in their activities, focused on active youth participation in society. The experience was an efficient way to raise awareness on the richness of cultural and linguistic diversity in Europe and outside Europe.

Finally a useful handbook about “Enlargement and Active citizenship” was published, in order to increase the visibility of the project’s results and its innovative practices and to show the important role played by NGOs in the reinforcement of democracy. The realization of a CD-ROM as well as the evaluation meeting completed the project imple-

## Projects on Active Citizenship

### 1.7.3 ALL.4.EU – Active citizenship and citizens' panel

**Lead Partner:** Region Istria

**Partners:** Balkan Assist Association (Bulgaria), Centrum Komunitneho Organizovania – CKO (Slovak Republic), Municipality of Vejle (Denmark), Association of the Local Democracy Agencies (France), Local Councils Association (Malta), Consortium for Development of Polesine – CONSVIPO (Italy)

ALL.4.EU is a project consisting in the setting-up of citizens' panels (groups of ordinary citizens, not spontaneously involved in European issues) in six different countries in Europe: Bulgaria, Slovak Republic, Denmark, France, Malta and Italy. The employed methodology of the citizens' panels was characterized by an active interaction between all the actors involved (citizens, local authorities, EU Institutions, etc.), to encourage and facilitate interaction and participation. This specific methodology's main goal was the opportunity to people to be involved and play an active role in the construction of Europe and to contribute to bridge the gap between citizens and the European Union. The citizens had the opportunity to gain new information and competencies to formulate and submit to local, regional and European decision makers their opinion in the form of recommendations. This is a major challenge also for the Region Istria, which ideally represents a bridge between Europe and pre-accession countries. Through this project, ALDA together with the Region Istria, sought to consolidate the innovative active methodology of "citizens' panels" to promote the full involvement of all European citizens in the decision making processes and aimed at

giving citizens the opportunity to interact and participate in constructing a more democratic and world-oriented Europe. The overall objective was to develop a sense of European identity, based on common values, history and culture and enriched through its cultural and linguistic diversity.

The Partners selected the participants for the citizens' panels' during two phases: at a first stage they choose three "leading citizens among civil society and local authorities representatives who are already active at local level, paying attention a gender-balanced representation. In the second phase, the "activators" selected ten participants among local authorities and civil society representatives who applied on voluntary basis. Politicians were also involved in citizens' panels meetings as resource people. In addition EU institutions representatives were informed and invited to participate both in local and trans-national activities, in order to allow citizens to directly interact with them.

Through an international meeting of citizens' panels and several info-days at local level, the project aimed at explaining the methods for guiding the process of building individual and collective opinions and recommendations to be submitted to the European institutions.

Citizens' panels directly promoted and organised the info-days at local level, involving citizens of the local community on an extensive basis.

At the beginning of the project each partner run at the local level a SWOT analysis (analysis of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) to assess identify, at the local level, the existing practices, tools and models in the field of citizens' participation in order to "profit" of the best practices and to promote synergies between the project and the on-going experiences. The analysis was run by the representatives of each partner with the technical support of experts of ALDA.

On 20-24 April 2009 an international training for the "citizen panel activators", titled "New institutional developments: a new momentum for active European citizenship" was held in Strasbourg. It aimed at providing to participants

knowledge, skills and competencies concerning: the concepts of “active citizenship” and “active European citizenship”, the concept of non-formal education, fostering their intercultural competences and skills to gather, select and give information. The training also aimed at enhancing their skills to draft recommendations and position papers to be addressed to decision makers at all levels.

In addition to the international training, each partner promoted a one-day event with the aims to encourage the participation at local level and to raise awareness about the importance of actively participating in the construction of Europe and to launch the citizens’ panels building process. Moreover, the local events aimed at presenting the “tasks” of citizens’ panels, focusing particularly on the research to be developed at local level providing relevant inputs guidelines for this purpose. The local events were very successful and had the following topics: “Youth Activism in Istria on the way to the EU” held on 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2009 in Pazin (Croatia); “Europe for citizens: Promotion of Active European Citizenship” on 14<sup>th</sup> May 2009 in Stara Zagora (Bulgaria); “Europe for us, we for Europe” held on 26<sup>th</sup> May 2009 in Zvolen (Slovakia); “EU-citizens’ panel – ALL.4.EU”, held on June 11<sup>th</sup> 2009 at the Vejle Business College (Denmark); “ALL.4.EU” Public Seminar, held on May 30<sup>th</sup> 2009 in Valletta (Malta); “Citizens for Europe: To promote an active citizenship” – Set-up of Local Citizens’ Panels, organized in Arquà Polesine – Rovigo (Italy) on June 11<sup>th</sup> 2009.

On the 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> July 2009, representatives from the different citizens’ panels met in Sofia (Bulgaria) in order to present the first results of the panels’ work and to elaborate common opinions and recommendations through the constitution of a trans-national citizens’ panel.

This meeting aimed also at drafting common “position papers” to be submitted to European decision makers as well as coordinating common activities-outputs among partners. Three working groups were created to discuss the following topics: participation of youth, mechanisms – how to be an active EU citizen and communication/Information.



**All.4.EU, participants at the citizens’ panel  
Stara Zagora (Bulgaria), May 2009**

At the local level, each citizens’ panel, in strict cooperation with the local partner, promoted 3-days workshops (Rovigo, Italy: 25<sup>th</sup> September, 2<sup>nd</sup> October and 8<sup>th</sup> October 2009; Region of Istria, Croatia: 18<sup>th</sup> September, 13<sup>th</sup> October 2009) aiming at sharing and providing information to the citizens, new knowledge, skills and competencies to better interact with local and regional decision makers, with the European Institutions and thus to better play the role of active European citizens.

At the end of the project, an international final conference (“Development of European active citizenship through the citizens’ panels’ methodology”) was held in Pula (Croatia) on the 4<sup>th</sup> of November 2009. The final conference, which was promoted and organized with the direct involvement of citizens’ panels – in cooperation with project partners – in all its phases, mainly focused on the submission of the recommendations to European decision makers. Proposals, opinions and position papers drafted by the citizens’ panels, both at the national and at the European level, were submitted to the European Commission, also through the involvement of Euro-MPs. This final stage was very interesting and was a concrete way to make citizens’ voice heard by the EU institutions at high level.

## Projects on Active Citizenship

### 1.7.4 Innovative and creative activities to raise citizens' awareness on the European elections 2009

**Donor:** Association of Local democracy Agencies

**Partners:** Italy: the municipality of Monfalcone; the municipality of Ravenna; the association Putignanonelmondo; France: Maison de l'Europe of the municipality of Caen

Accompanying the efforts of the European Union intuitions to promote the vote for the elections of the EU Parliament, in spring of 2009, ALDA launched a call for proposals to its members to organise activities to raise awareness about the upcoming elections of the European Parliament, to improve citizens' understanding of the role and the functioning of the European Institutions, and increasing citizens' participation at the European level through voting, fostering debates between citizens and local authorities and advocate to bring European decision makers and citizens closer together.

The overall objective of this initiative was twofold: first, to organise events to encourage people to vote for the European Parliament elections in May 2009. Second, to use the occasion of the elections to bring the debate of citizens' participation and the importance of a better understanding of the European Union to the forefront.

The first objective of encouraging voting was reached

through the promotion of the important role of the European Parliament, and the increased understanding of the scope of citizen's participation in the European Union for an increased democracy.

The second objective to raise awareness and understanding about the European Union was reached through various activities with a focus on the role of the schools and local authorities in providing knowledge, adequate information and engaging fruitful debates at the local level.

ALDA selected 4 partners, which have been selected to implements 5 sets of activities in France and Italy. The implementing partners are:

- the municipality of Monfalcone (Italy)
- the municipality of Ravenna (Italy)
- the association Putignanonelmondo (Italy)
- Maison de l'Europe of the municipality of Caen (France)

The common approach and method were participatory initiatives that brings together actors from different sectors, and to run both activities targeting a particular group (for example the youth) and activities that brought together categories of people that do not usually meet (for instance foster a debate between students and politicians). Participatory approach allowed actors from different sectors to work together towards a common goal.

The overall outcome of the project was an increased awareness among citizens, in particular youth, who were new to voting or voting for the first time for the European elections and a building of capacities of the actors able to provide information about Europe to the citizens (local authorities, actors in the civil society, teachers). Partners' endeavour to diversify different sorts of events showed the importance to engage the society at all levels, and through different means. The variety of initiatives taken testifies the numerous opportunities that exist to engage the debate on citizens' participation in Europe.

Activities:

## 1. Debate on “The future of European citizens in the heart of the next European elections” with Catherine Lalumière, former minister and vice-president of the European Parliament, on the 24<sup>th</sup> of April 2009, Maison de l’Europe, Caen, (France)

**Partners:** Movement Européen Basse Normandie and Maisons de l’Europe (France)

This debate was integrated into a wider project to promote Europe, the importance of citizens’ participation, and the crucial role of the Parliament in providing democratic control over other European institutions. It aimed at reflecting upon the adequacy between information and the purpose of voting as well as it aimed at sharing actions and encouraging cooperation in innovative projects.

The event successfully brought together local elected representatives, local authorities, young people involved in the local life and representatives of associations.



An interview at the seminar in Ravenna (Italy)

## 2. The European Week, 5<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> of May 2009, Basse Normandie region, by Maison de l’Europe, (France)

In May 2009 “Maison de l’Europe” (Caen, France), together with the “Jean Rostand” high school (Caen, France), municipal council of Colombelles (France), Maison du Citoyen (Hérouville Saint Clair, France) and “Mémorial pour la Paix” (Caen, France), organised a series of event to raise awareness on the European elections and the importance of citizens participation.

The events were organised in four different sets of activities: the “Semaine de l’Europe”, an open debate with two candidates to the European elections, the Conference-debate “Europe: many preconceptions”: exchange on the institutions, the economy, education and the debate meeting and exhibition around the “Fête de l’Europe”: “What opportunities can Europe offer to the Youth?”.

In order to ensure the sustainability of the impact of this event, “Maison de l’Europe” implemented a holistic programme around the priority of European citizenship and awareness raising on democratic participation. The “Maison de l’Europe” aims at being the place for different actors to gather, discuss, and work together. It aims at attracting in particular youth, actors of civil society, and institutions working for European democracy.

## 3. “Festa dell’ Europa”, 4<sup>th</sup> of May 2009, in Monfalcone by the municipality of Monfalcone (Italy)

The municipality of Monfalcone (Italy) decided to run a project “Festa dell’Europa” (Europe’s party) in partnership with schools of Monfalcone and “United World College” of Duino (Italy) to promote the knowledge of the European Parliament and to raise citizens awareness on the European Elections 2009 essentially through schools, targeting mainly



Mr. Notarangelo (in the centre) from Region Puglia, conference "Use your vote" in Putignano (Italy)

young people, and indirectly, their families. A special focus was given to eighteen years olds who were voting for the first time.

Prior to the implementation of the project, a working group was set up with schools of Monfalcone composed of principals and teachers who coordinated the programme activities. The municipality of Monfalcone run also training activities for the involved staff.

The main objective of the event was to raise awareness among the youth about the history and evolution of the European Union and promote the importance of citizens' participation through voting for the European Parliament elections.

#### 4. "Diventa Cittadino europeo", Municipality of Ravenna, (Italy)

**Partners:** Province of Ravenna (Italy), Flaminia Foundation (Italy), Europe Direct– European Carrefour Romagna (Italy)

The Municipality of Ravenna (Italy) implemented the project "Diventa Cittadino europeo" (Become a European

Citizen) in partnership with the province of Ravenna, "Flaminia Foundation" and Europe Direct– European Carrefour Romagna (Italy).

This initiative aimed at encouraging and developing citizens' participation through voting at the recent European Parliament elections. The seminar targeted young people who were experiencing European elections for the first time and needed a comprehensive explanation on Europe, its institutions and programmes. The information campaign on the event reached about 2.000 individuals from schools, universities and civil society.

#### 5. Events and campaigns, Putignanonelmondo, Putignano (Italy)

Association "Putignanonelmondo" (Italy), following its statutory mission, promotes and produces entertainment activities and active citizenship projects, develops cultural resources and supports local associations. Putignanonelmondo implemented a project to raise citizen's awareness on the European elections 2009 in partnership with ATS "I MAKE" - the local expression of associations - which allowed to reach a very broad public through a series of seminars, mostly targeting young people and Third Age people. That strategy broadened the audience to citizens usually more reluctant to participate actively in political life.

The overall objective was to raise awareness of local citizens on the key role they could play in European integration, understood not as a purely political and economic team, but as an entity composed of individuals who choose to be active towards common goals.

The project substantially raised awareness in the local community on the theme of citizens' participation in order to involve people in the promotion of a single European identity, beyond the diversity of national and individual cultures.

## Projects on Active Citizenship

### 1.7.5 The Elections of the European Parliament '09 ...a challenge for our common future!

A joint initiative by ALDA and the European Commission Delegation in Milan, Italy.

On May 21 2009, ALDA in partnership with the Universities of Padua and Venice (which are ALDA members since 2008), organized a Conference: "The Elections of the European Parliament - a challenge for our common future!". The initiative was sponsored by the Representation of the European Commission in Milan, by the Office of the European Parliament in Milan, Italy. The event aimed at encouraging Italian citizens to go to vote to the European elections, which took place on the 6 and 7 June.

The conference took place at the University, a place where mainly young people, the future decision takers in Europe, come together. It is also a traditional place for human sciences and political discussion, which influenced Europe as we know it today to a tremendous extent. Involving the university allowed ALDA to attract a large number of participants, excellent academic speakers and also speakers from a professional field. Two members of the European Parliament attended as well.

The conference provided basic information on the role of the European Parliament within the European Union, on its functioning, on its history and on its main policies promoted at European level and focused on the importance



Promotion of EP election, 21<sup>st</sup> May 2009 in Padova (Italy)

of being an active citizen through the vote in order to participate to the decision making processes at EU level. The event was a great success since many students, ordinary citizens, University teachers and journalists from Veneto area attended. The debate was lively and offered a great occasion for the promotion of EU values and of EU citizenship.

## Projects on Active Citizenship

### 1.7.6 Town Twinning: a vehicle for European integration

**Donor:** European Commission, Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency

**Partner leader:** ALDA

“Town Twinning: a vehicle for European integration” was a project aimed at promoting town-twinning, focusing in particular on the multilateral decentralized cooperation approach, as a vehicle to foster European Integration and to strengthen twinning agreements relations amongst local authorities in the enlarged Europe. It sought to provide new knowledge, skills and capacities of the responsible people for twinning activities at local level.

The project targeted a large number of municipalities, namely 110 institutions directly involved in the events, and had therefore an important multiplier effect. ALDA was the coordinated the preparatory phase and involved the supporting partners from the very beginning on order to favour and promote their full commitment to the project.

A training “Capacity building for Local Authorities in the field of twinning” was implemented with success on the 8th and the 11<sup>th</sup> of June 2009 in Shkodra (Albania). It was addressed to local authorities, especially to those in charge of twinning activities, and to other organizations having a specific knowledge and experience of the topic like twinning associations. The training focused on three different aspects: information of the concept of town twinning in

an European perspective, competencies on twinning methodologies, cooperation providing tools to promote and support networking and cooperation in the field of twinning. The training course as a whole was conceived as an “ad-hoc space” to establish and foster relations and cooperation. During the training, the participants were requested to work concretely on project development both on town twinning and on thematic networking activities of twinned towns, in cooperation with other interested and motivated institutions of the enlarged Europe.

An On line Advisory Service, run by ALDA, supported the preparation and the implementation of good quality projects. It represented a new “output” since it had the characteristics of a pilot action and it was improved according to the needs and the requests of the beneficiaries and the most relevant stakeholders. The service opened immediately after the training and it was conceived as a long-lasting facility offered to the members of ALDA and thus, thanks to the sustainability conditions offered by ALDA network, it continued to work after the conclusion of the project. Thanks to ALDA deep knowledge and expertise on the to-



International workshop “Building Europe through town-twinning”, 4<sup>th</sup> of December 2009, Skopje



Worskhop on "Town twinning" with Marta Petrova and Antonella Valmorbida, Skopje, 4<sup>th</sup> December 2009

This project revealed how is important improving day by day the promotion of the cooperation between NGOs and local authorities in order to make sure that the civil society is both representative and represented. Town twinning represents an activity that should involve the entire community, through the encouragement of the participation at all levels and fostering all citizens to take an active part in it. Town twinning is definitely a "tool" to promote and foster citizens' participation in the construction of a united Europe!

pics addressed, On line Advisory Service's consultancy and advisory actions promoted (and still promoting) the establishment of new relationships and the development of good quality projects.

An International workshop, titled "Building Europe through town-twinning" was held on the 4<sup>th</sup> of December 2009 in Skopje (Macedonia). It mainly aimed at promoting the different forms and concept of town-twinning amongst local authorities and networking, gathering local authorities and civil society representatives from Europe and the Balkans to discuss the contribution of town-twinning and civil society networking to the European integration process and the building of a European identity.

At the end of the project a final publication was issued: it was a handbook in order to promote further multiplying effects, which was disseminated through ALDA network and through the networks of the associations of Local Authorities, which are members of ALDA.

All the activities were promoted through the Applicant website where supporting partners and ALDA members had a link to their own websites.

## Projects on Active Citizenship

### 1.7.7 “ALDA – Your partner in Europe to foster citizens’ participation!”

**Supported by:** Council of Europe, Education and Culture DG “Europe for Citizens’ Programme

In 2009 the Association of Local Democracy Agencies celebrated its 10 years of commitment of human rights and democracy. On this occurrence two communication issues were issued: a publication “ALDA – 10 years in the making of a new Europe” and a video titled “Your partner in Europe to foster citizens’ participation!”. It traced all projects implemented by the Association and its Agencies during these ten years of activities, aiming at raising specific awareness on a new idea of “Active Citizenship”, one of ALDA’s main fields of expertise. The video was distributed not only during the celebrations for the tenth-anniversary but also spread in ALDA network all over Europe.



Active Citizenship Video issued by ALDA for its 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, May 2009

## Projects on Women's empowerment and related issues

### 1.7.8 "Bandiar, switch on Europe" – "Active citizenship, women participation"

**Lead Partner:** ASAEL (Association of Aragonese Local Authorities) in Spain

**Partners:** ALDA (France), BalticFem (Sweden), Municipality of Bydgoszcz (Poland) and Reggio Emilia Province (Italy)

BANDIAR project aimed at raising awareness about participation of women in political life in the local level and to spread the idea that European Union needs also to be built from a bottom-up perspective, involving local authorities. It aimed at fostering exchanges of ideas, experiences and strategies on gender issues, between citizens and politicians, to stimulate the active participation of women in the processes of representative democracy at local, national and international level. The project was based on an interactive dialogue through the principle of citizens' panels, gathering ordinary citizens to discuss and debate about certain issues. The objectives of the project focused also on promoting the use of ICT to broaden and deepen political participation, especially for those people that are not used to take the floor in the debates. E-participation will be an excellent tool for encouraging people to explain their opinions, recommendations with the final purpose of promoting gender opportunities as a European value and of fostering the feeling of being part of the EU. ALDA was very active in involving local authorities in order to

encourage local civil servants, local politicians and public in general to feel part of the EU. Moreover ALDA, as an international association, focused on women participation in politics in Europe, organising two workshops, gathering the panel.

The first workshop took place on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2009, gathering 25 participants, mostly women, with discussions around conciliation of public and private life, women poverty in terms of lower salaries, female representation imposed by the society, education in schools. The participants elaborated ideas to reduce obstacles that prevent women participation in the public life, such as: a quality information campaign at the European level, accompanying measures in the legislation of gender equality, coordinating the different existing networks of women.

The second workshop took place on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2009, focused on the role that schools could play to enhance women participation in politics. 18 women involved in scholar and social actions were present and discussed about young girls and women discrimination at school. The project will be completed in January 2010 with a final conference in Brussels, which will gather representatives of the citizens' panels, who will present their results across Europe.



Debate on women participation in politics, Strasbourg (France), July 2009

## Projects on Women's empowerment and related issues

### 1.7.9 Emanzipar

**Donor:** European Commission

**Lead Partner:** Asael (Aragonese Association of Local Authorities), Spain, OTHER Partners: ALDA, Province of Reggio Emilia in Italy, Auxilium in Austria, BD Center in Poland, Local Councils' Association in Malta, Bauska District Council in Latvia, Harrow Council in London, UK and Larnaca District Development Agency in Cyprus.

Citizen' participation in the local decision-making processes can be traced as far back as Plato with his concepts of freedom of speech, assembly, voting, and equal representation. Today, these concepts form the basic pillars of modern democracies. But in today's society citizen' participation means much more than going to the polls. An ever growing number of interest groups and civil society organisations stand up for their beliefs, while a decreasing number of people participate in elections. Is it correct to speak of a passive, indifferent youth versus active adults? What kind of forms can participation take today? These were the main topic addressed by the project "Emanzipar", lasting from May 2008 till 2009, which was developed by Asael together with ALDA and Network Liedra, in the framework of the overall "Youth in Action Programme" and, of the "Youth for Europe – Youth exchanges" programme. This project was implemented to raise young people's awareness on gender domestic violence and European issues. Special care was given to the participation of disabled young people in the programme.

ALDA members were active in activities aiming at reaching the young Europeans living in the rural areas in order to promote their active participation. The project addressed also civil servants of local authorities working in the field of



Study visit in Strasbourg (France) for the "Emanzipar" project

youth, local youth decision makers, members of associations and non-profit organizations, school teachers in rural areas, youth associations and the general young public. The participation in the project of ALDA members and partners was high, among which the following took part: United Games International (Austria), Province of Venice (Italy) and City of Osijek (Croatia). Relevant activities were implemented also by the City of Portogruaro (Italy) which is member of ALDA, in the framework of this overall project implemented specific activities like the one titled: "Young Ideas in Portogruaro" which gave the exceptional possibility to young students of the third and fourth year of a high school to plan and develop their social, cultural, environmental, sportive and creative initiatives and activities in the area of their community. In addition, the activity "Uno sguardo all'universo" consisted in the organization and the creation of a planetarium where people of all ages will have the opportunity to comprehend and examine closely the planets and the mysteries of the universe. This activity was completed in April 2009 by the opening of the planetarium, prepared by a group of amateurs from Ferrara (Italy). This activity was also an opportunity to reward the winning class who will participate in the competition aimed to achieve a model on "The planets and the University".

## Projects on Youth

### 1.7.10 eCLAU project - Young Europeans in Action: participating against climate change - approved under the European Programme “Youth in Action”

**Donor:** European Commission

**Lead partner:** ASAEL (Association of Aragonese Municipalities)

**Partners:** France: ALDA, Italy: Reggio Emilia Province, Republic of Bulgaria: Association for development of mountain municipalities, Greece: Institute of Entrepreneurship Development.

The project was led by ASAEL (Association of Aragonese Municipalities), in partnership with ALDA. The objective was to encourage youth participation across Europe through an independent website, designed by the Greek partners, [www.e-clau.net](http://www.e-clau.net), and to get them to debate among their own nationality and with each nationality about climate change issues. Each country had its website section, in its own language, and moderated a forum about an environmental theme.

ALDA leaded the communication of the whole project, drafting the newsletter and the promotional brochures and



Mrs. Schwoob from ALDA staff, opening the “eCLAU” workshop at the CoE, Strasbourg (France)

evaluating the communication among all the partners.

As the other partners, ALDA organised an international workshop in Strasbourg on 25<sup>th</sup> June 2009, promoting the importance of the debate among youth on climate change and encouraging online forums and the use of interactive website to spread information about this important issue. The workshop was dedicated to deal with the international environmental policies and to e-participation. 24 youngsters, representatives of local authorities, NGOs and private sector participated actively. The workshop led to the conclusion that the European Union should keep concentrating on environmental and climate change issues and strengthen its action to protect environment.

## Projects on Youth

### 1.7.11 “Civil Society and Local Authorities: Working Together for the EU integration”

**Partners:** Citizens Pact for South Eastern Europe – Association of the Local Democracy Agencies

During the EXIT Festival, which is an annual summer music festival in the Petrovaradin Fortress of Novi Sad (Serbia), ALDA and the Citizens’ Pact for SEE jointly organised a Panel Discussion on “Civil Society and Local Authorities: Working Together for the EU integrations” which took place on the AGORA stage of the Festival on the 9th of July. Such initiatives need financial resources that are scarcely available in the current period of global economic crisis.

Municipalities are not always able to provide financial support for such initiatives even where there is a political will to do so. Yet financial instruments designed to support strengthening links between local authorities and civil society across Europe are available. The intention of this debate will be also to discuss the costs and benefits of the Europe for Citizens Program. In fact The European Commission, has a variety of financial instruments designed for the purpose of strengthening the cooperation between local authorities and civil society, among which the most prominent is the “Europe for Citizens Program”.

This program supports a wide range of activities and organisations promoting “active European citizenship”, especially the involvement of citizens and civil society organisa-

tions in the process of European integration. Action 1 of the Program has a special concentration on the development of cross-border cooperation initiatives and links between local authorities and civil society in different European countries.

The debate focused on the role of local authorities in the process of EU integration of the countries in the Western Balkans, with a special focus on the cooperation between local governments, grass root organisations across borders and the development of the participative democracy in the region. Positive examples such as the triangular cooperation between the towns of Osijek-Novi Sad-Tuzla, and the experience of the twelve Local Democracy Agencies of ALDA were considered and discussed, as examples of best practices in the field of regional cooperation between local authorities and civil society organizations. The participation to the event was high and the topic raised the interest of the participants more than expected.



Mr. Vinther, ALDA President, at the “Exit Festival” stage, Novi Sad (Serbia), July 2009

## Projects on Youth

### 1.7.12 Youth: the right direction

**Donor:** European Commission

**Partner leader:** ALDA

**Partners:** youth organisations "SEGA" (Macedonia), Ligue d'enseignement de Calvados, (France), the LDAs of Osijek, Prijedor, Verteneglio, Montenegro, Sisak, Mostar, Subotica, Zavidovići and Niš.

With the project "Youth: the right direction" ALDA enhanced the promotion and visibility of the European Youth programme in South Eastern Europe and Caucasus. The project included several activities combining co-operation, training and information aspects.

The local partners were in charge to select young participants, mainly aged from 15 to 25, among representatives from youth councils and youth organisations as well as young people working in local and regional authorities. The purpose was to let young people get familiar with the EU Youth program, to encourage them to exchange information especially thanks to the peer-to-peer innovative approach. It is based on the involvement of young people and youth workers both as learners and as resource persons to act at the local level as "multipliers" to promote the youth programme and the development of youth projects and initiatives. The peer education methodology had a very high impact for the involvement of young people. Other methods used were participatory with bottom-up approach: working groups, role-plays and open-space methods. All the participants were not only listeners but also contributors in the events.

In each activity ALDA kept balance among the participants in terms of social, gender, geographical criteria.

The "Job shadowing" activity from April to July 2009 gathered 10 young people from SEE that are actively involved in the youth projects of the LDAs (Osijek, Prijedor, Verteneglio, Montenegro, Sisak, Mostar, Subotica, Zavidovići, Niš and the youth organization SEGA from Macedonia). They had a chance to have a short stay with a partner organisation in another country with the aim of exchanging good practices, acquiring skills and knowledge and building long-term partnerships through participative observation.



EVS training in Kotor (Montenegro), February 2009

These "job shadowing" practices provided the youth officers a training opportunity with "learning by doing" methodology. These experiences included meeting with actors involved in youth projects, observation of the functioning of the youth organisation, the communication and the regular activities of the hosting organisation. Three information seminars were organized in 3 different countries in order to involve as much as possible young people from the countries involved. They took place in Their aim was to

promote the visibility of the new Youth in Action program (2007-2013) in South Eastern Europe and Caucasus. With these seminars, ALDA provided training on Youth in action program, especially information, setting up specialized info points, to more than 50 youngsters and youth workers from SEE and Caucasus.

Besides the training activities, an important moment on this event was the accreditation of the LDAs by SALTO SEE resource centre. All the LDAs involved were accredited and became "Sending, Hosting and Coordinating Organisations" for EVS. The LDAs benefited from the presence of the SALTO staff for SEE to ask questions and share some ideas of how to develop high quality EVS projects and to promote this programme among the youth on local level. Finally, this activity focused on the future cooperation by creation of an EVS network that will include all the LDAs and other European partners. These young people are now youth ambassadors among their peers and are willing to continue working in the youth field on local level. This result will finally benefit the youth from the Region who will have a possibility to live and work as a volunteer in EU, as well as the youngsters from all around Europe that will come to discover the Balkans by working in one of the LDAs. At the end, these young people directly participated in the evaluation of the events by giving general overlook of the past events.

Four networks were set up as logical outcome of the implementation of the project, such as a **network of specialized info-points for youth** aiming at exchanging information between specialized info-points at the LDAs. A special **network of Youth ambassadors** was the outcome of the information training. The aim was to contribute in the cooperation and exchange of experiences of young people in the region about youth issues. In addition a **network of peer-educators** was established as an outcome of the specific training of peer educators-multipliers, last but not least a **network of EVS organisations** was the outcome of the EVS training. These exchanges and networks contribu-



ted in the creation and consolidation of strong and long-lasting partnership between youth organisations and local and regional authorities.

During the three years of implementation (2006-2009) this project was successful also thanks to the implementation of several other actions such as: a dissemination campaign through website and newsletters and the itinerant crossing youth fair.

## Projects in Caucasus

### 1.7.13 Support to Local and Regional Democracy in the South Caucasus

**Donor:** Congress of Local and Regional Authorities

**Lead partner:** ALDA; Partner: Local Democracy Agency Georgia

This project was conceived by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities and ALDA in order to strengthen local and regional democracy in the South Caucasus and support the work of the LDA Georgia, as a direct follow-up action to Resolution 272 (2008) on “Local consequences in the conflict zone in the South Caucasus: support from European local and regional authorities”, adopted by the Congress.

The project focused on encouraging further cooperation and networking between the Local Authorities Associations in the South Caucasus and civil society, strengthening their knowledge and skills and set a base to enlarge Local Democracy Agencies in the region. In order to achieve these objectives two activities were implemented.

#### 1. Conference of Local Authorities Associations of South Caucasus, Kutaisi (Georgia)

On the 29<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup> of October a successful seminar was held in Kutaisi to generate a debate and an exchange of knowledge and expertise in specific areas of good local governance such as: state models of decentralisation and the role of local self-governments, importance of the European Charter of local Self-Government, local governments’

efficiency in service provision and delivery, local sustainable development strategies, local government financing and fiscal decentralisation as well as citizen participation in local policy/decision making and international decentralised and inter-municipal co-operation.

The core topics of the Conference were discussed with the authorities who took part at the event, such as the Association of Communities of Armenia, the Association of Settlement Municipalities of Azerbaijan, the Association of City Municipalities of Azerbaijan and the Association of Villages of Azerbaijan. In addition some members of the Congress delegation of Georgia took part at the seminar, as well as representatives from Georgian local authorities, and two representatives of the Network of Local Authority Associations of South-East Europe (NALAS) invited as experts, who discussed on the benefits of networking for Local Authorities Associations. Besides, representatives from the Council of Europe office in Georgia and representatives from the Congress secretariat referred about the Congress support to ALDA and to the Network of Local Associations of Local Authorities in South East Europe, (NALAS).



Mr. Milovanovic, member of ALDA GG, and Mr. Vinther, ALDA President, in Kutaisi (Georgia) October 2009



**“Support for the Local and Regional democracy”  
a conference in Kutaisi (Georgia), October 2009**

Last but not least representatives from ALDA presented LDA Georgia’s and its role in the South Caucasus. LDAs are credible and strong tools to support the development of local democracy and can therefore play a role in the region. The opening of an LDA in Azerbaijan and in Armenia was discussed. The representatives from Azerbaijan were rather sceptical about the opportunity of opening an Agency in the coming year. However, they invited ALDA and the Congress to conduct a feasibility study to evaluate the added value of such a process.

The participants of the conference underlined also that there is a clear need to further support local and regional democracy in the South Caucasus. In this regard, they stressed that National Associations of Local Authorities have a key role to play, as their core aim is the decentralisation of the state powers and the development of local self-governmental institutions. These tasks should nevertheless be carried out in cooperation with central authorities and other local and international stakeholders.

The National Associations of Local Authorities of the South Caucasus had a beneficial exchange of information

and agreed to look for ways of further cooperation in the future, with due consideration of existing impediments, but with the full support of the Congress. The Governments of the South Caucasus countries need to commit themselves to further reforms towards stronger local government and identified key priorities, with a view to encouraging targeted, demand-driven support by the international community. Several key priorities, crucial for the local democracy reform in the region, were pointed out as fundamental: capacity building for elected officials; reinforcing democracy at the grass-roots level through increased participation of citizens and civil society in local public life and providing local authorities with resources adequate to the tasks allocated to them.

Moreover, it was agreed that special attention should be paid to preparing the units of local self-government to be ready to apply for and manage Eastern Partnership and other available European Union funds. The participation of South Caucasus countries in the Eastern Partnership (EaP) of the European Union provides an additional framework for advancing the common causes in the local democracy area. Cooperation activities to be carried out within the EaP Platform for “Democracy, good governance and stability” will offer extended opportunities to consolidate the positive results achieved so far. In this regard, the participants of the conference underlined the need for closer coordination between the Council of Europe and the European Union with a view to avoiding unnecessary duplication and effective use of available resources.

Finally, it was pointed out that there is a need to strengthen the role of the LDA Kutaisi in the region as one of the key actors to promote local democracy and cooperation between local authorities and civil society, as well as to conduct a feasibility study on the enlargement of LDAs network with special focus on the added value that the possible opening of LDAs in Armenia and in Azerbaijan can bring to already existing local democracy mechanisms and tools.

## 2. Training on Active Citizenship for Kutaisi local self-government and civil society

The training on active citizenship for the representatives of Kutaisi Local Self-government and civil society organizations was organized in Kutaisi (Georgia) between the 1<sup>st</sup> and the 4<sup>th</sup> of December 2009, as a follow-up of the previous Conference. The training aimed at strengthening knowledge and skills of local authorities and civil society organizations, which are interested in the topic of Active/European citizenship as well as aimed at building new relationships and developing synergies between local authorities and civil society organizations in order to activate new participation and citizenship processes at local level. Therefore, the participants, which were mainly governmental and non-governmental organizations, developed a joint action plan for future cooperation in the field of active citizenship. This topic was proposed to be implemented through strengthening of NGO sector Development of partnership groups, introduction of strategic approach and improvement of project management skills.

Despite the lack of information about current financial funds and development opportunities revealed by the participants, and the fact that there is a missed participation of management level among Local Government participants as well as a lack of involvement of Business sector in local development activity, there was a very high level of motivation, participation and activity among all participants. The training showed also that both NGOs and Local Government are working actively already on dealing with very important and practical issues, based on current needs and that they are eager to cooperate with each other on Active citizenship development and tackling the current problems. At the end, this activity pointed out that there is space for improvement on project management issues, especially on action planning, project monitoring and impact evaluation and development of indicators.



**“Support for the Local and Regional democracy”  
a conference in Kutaisi (Georgia), October 2009**

Future projects will follow the recommendations adopted during the conference and will include the organization of a Congress/ALDA joint missions in Azerbaijan and Armenia to evaluate the added value of the opening of an LDA and to launch the process. The proposal for the organization of a regional conference in the South Caucasus on local and regional democracy came out also, in order to gather representatives of Local Associations Authorities but also international partners (including potential partners for LDAs in Azerbaijan and Armenia) and experts. The opportunity of working on cross-border projects, following the example of the Euro-region Caucasus, will be taken into consideration and various activities, like exchanges of best practices or workshops, will be organised. This project launched a successful dynamic that ALDA and the Congress will jointly use to develop and strengthen their strategic action in the South Caucasus.

## Projects in Caucasus

### 1.7.14 Paving the way to open an LDA in Azerbaijan

**Donor:** funded by ALDA internal resources

From 28 June till the first of July 2009 a fact finding mission was realized by ALDA in Azerbaijan. The purpose was to meet all the relevant stakeholders, to get a better knowledge of the country and to evaluate the situation of the country in relation to a potential LDA in Azerbaijan. The mission was organized by ALDA in partnership with the Baku Political Studies – School of Political Studies Programme, under the auspices of the Council of Europe. Mr. Oriano Otocan, from Region Istria (Croatia), member of ALDA Governing Board, together with ALDA staff members attended the mission.

They met several representatives of the government and of non-governmental organizations from the Baku area and from Quba region, 170 km north from the capital Baku, region, which is the potential seat of the local democracy agency. They also attended the yearly Alumni Conference of Baku Political Studies Programme, which is a programme operating in the framework of the Centre for Economic and Political research (FAR centre) with the objective of educating young socially active citizens on various themes affecting the current local and international political processes and of a better understanding of the European political culture. The participants come from the non-governmental sector, the public administrations, the political and business world or the media.

Mr. Oriano Otocan addressed a speech on the international experiences of local governments including a presentation of what ALDA is and what its activities are, an explanation of the European Charter on local self-governments, a description of the different organizational models and structures in the various European states, the current trends, the principles of the Council of Europe for a effective democratic governance on the local level. One of the impressions the members of the mission got during their visit was that many people are critical of the current government regar-



Mr. Otocan (ALDA GB/Istria Region), in the centre in Baku (Azerbaijan) to open a new LDA

ding the state of democracy in the country. A lot of people are socially very active and actually carry out various relevant functions within the economic and social life of the country and do not really belong to the country's national political establishment.

The ALDA staff who joined the mission had a strong impression from Azerbaijan, as an extremely peculiar country, which, with regard to the current state of the democratic processes, reminds the Croatia of the mid and end 90ies of



Baku (Azerbaijan), souvenir market, October 2009

the past century, at the time of President Tuđman's mandate. Thus, there is a great potential of democratically oriented and socially active people who, on their part, still cannot manage to create a critical mass for democratic changes of the society. They are trying to find support in the cooperation and the contacts with foreign countries institutions. On the other hand, because of the past economic situation, a great importance is granted first of all to the creation of material wealth, with the expansion of the consumer society (e.g. luxury automobiles in the streets).

Azerbaijan is certainly a highly centralized state with a powerful political apparatus that does not leave much room for initiatives especially on the local level. Many things depend on connections, resourcefulness and good relations with the government. The need to develop local democracies is certainly one of the crucial points and one of the things in common with the activities of ALDA. There is cadre potential in the sector of civil society and politics (often overlapping as those who have not succeeded to realize their initiatives through the political process are active in the civil sector). There is the potential to participate in

projects with the objective of local democracy promotion but also projects of all the other fields of work that local governments come across.

In its future activities ALDA, provided that its Governing Board's political lines will tend towards that, will take into account that while supporting the civil sector and democratization, it should also try to promote those activities which have an impact on local development (for example the know how on communal problem solving, the sanitary conditions for instance of markets, the tourism standards and similar), therefore tackle more specific questions and problems which will find the support of the state government (ex-com).

For sure, a new LDA in Azerbaijan, thanks to multilateral cooperation of local and international partners, could be an excellent instrument to promote human rights, local development and local democracy in a country, such as Azerbaijan, which really deserves it.

## Projects in Caucasus

### 1.7.15 REACT: Reinforcing ACTions of capacity building for civil society

**Donor:** European Commission

**Partner leader:** ALDA

**Partners:** in Belarus: Lev Sapieha Foundation, BOTZH, BOZP;  
in Italy: Municipality of Monfalcone

The objective of this project is strengthening the role of Non State Actors and Local authorities in the field of poverty reduction in the context of sustainable development, according to Millennium Development Goals:

- strengthening capacity of civil society organizations to be engaged in local development processes and in implementing sustainable development strategies;
- foster social dialogue and cooperation between civil society organizations and local authorities in the field of development;
- to support joint actions between Non State Actors and Local authorities in order to reduce poverty and foster sustainable development;
- to support civic initiatives, realized jointly with Local authorities, aiming at improving citizens' participation in fostering sustainable development in Belarus.

The first activity was a kick-off international conference in Brussels on 25<sup>th</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> May 2009. This conference launched a process aiming at raising the civil society awareness in Belarus. It was very useful to make a 20 people Belarusian delegation who went to Brussels, actively informed about Millennium Development Goals, EU institutions and democratic values, and to confront Western and Eastern Europe opinions about Belarus. One of the main activities was a Training ses-

sion on "Local Self-government in Belarus as prerequisite for civil society development: present condition and perspectives" in Minsk on 24<sup>th</sup> October. The day event addressed the following topics: sustainable development, Local Agenda 21, a Project of Law on Local self-government in Belarus, Local Self-Government in Bydgoszcz (Poland), as an example of local democracy in Eastern Europe. Two round-tables on the themes "Experiences of interaction between NGOs and local authorities: forms and methods" and "The forms of participation of citizens in decision-making process on local level" gathered thirty participants, among local NGO representatives, who found the day very interesting and enriching. Their participation to this training was not so obvious considered the political situation in Belarus. Their commitment and their strong shows how important it is to contribute to set democracy in the country. Such initiatives should be multiplied in the whole country, to raise people's awareness and make things change more effectively. This project includes a re-granting scheme, in which ALDA, supported by Lev Sapieha Foundation, will be funding in 2010 ten pilot projects focused on sustainable development and enhancement of civil society. It will be fore sure a way to support grass-root organizations and to sustain the promotion of human rights and democracy from below in Belarus.



People from Belarus at the "REACT" conference in Brussels (Belgium), May 2009

## Projects on Migration

### 1.7.16 Legal Aid Center for Moldovan Women Migrants in Italy

**Donor:** EC-UN Joint Migration & Development Initiative (Jm&Di)

**Partner leader:** Public Association "Europa TIME"/Moldova

**Partners:** ALDA

In the Framework of Ec-Un Joint Migration & Development Initiative (Jm&Di) ALDA, in cooperation with the Public Association "Europa TIME" (Moldova), was granted for a project aiming at running a Legal Aid Center for Moldovan Women Migrants in Italy. The general objective of the programme was the empowerment of Moldovan Migrant Women in Italy by providing them real and effective free informational and legal assistance.

This project foresaw the establishment of a centre for assisting Moldovan migrants, specifically women and children, in Italy on legal issues. The assistance had to be provided in the host country (Italy) and also in their home country (Moldova) providing them free legal counselling and defending their human rights. Aim of the project was also the creation of an effective mechanism for empowering Moldovan migrant women in Italy through an infrastructure comprising civil society organizations, local and central public authorities from Moldova and Italy.

ALDA played the role of coordinating all the activities which took place on the territory of Italy, and which were implemented by the joint efforts of all the partner-organizations.

Other steps of the project were the creation of a data base about the legal and socio-economic profiles of the beneficiaries who profit of the services of the Legal Aid Center in Rome. Moreover a "Know your rights" brochure was widely disseminated through the Italian Consulate in Moldova and through the local public authorities in Moldova with the purpose of improving the comprehension of immigrants' rights in the host country and to inform them about the services provided by the Legal Aid Center for Women Migrants in Italy. It was expected to have over 10.000 migrant women informed about their rights on the basis of the activities performed within this centre, such as distribution of brochures and leaflets, elaboration of the website, delivering of free informational and legal support.

ALDA started researching on migration issues and taking part in several relevant training activities in Italy giving added value and support to the project. ALDA got in contact with several lawyers and was very active in order to find an efficient and available lawyer to be dedicated to the project and in order to establish an operational office for the legal counselling. Despite ALDA's and other partners commitment, unfortunately, due to serious internal problems affecting Europa TIME, the project implementation has been definitively stopped in December 2009 with no possibility to pursue the fixed objectives. Nevertheless ALDA consolidated its experience on human rights namely, immigrants' rights and is ready to start new projects in this field with more reliable partners.

## Pilot Projects in Med Area

### 1.7.17 Capitalize on Migrant Capacities

**Donor:** EG-UN Joint Migration and Development Initiative

**Partner leader:** ALDA

**Partners:** Region Sicily and Lecce Municipality in Italy and FACM, the Algerian Forum for Citizenship and Modernity, in Algeria.

Capitalize on Migrant Capacities was a project aiming at transforming brain waste into brain gain, and thus: to strengthen the dialogue between migrant associations and local authorities in Algeria on issues related to migration and their role in capitalizing on migrant capacities; to develop strategies to channel the capacities of prospective migrants and returnees also by orienting the pre-departure and exploring their potential of after pre-departure orientation;

to facilitate the professional reintegration of returnees and prospective migrants; to encourage high skilled Algerian emigrants, in France and Italy, to contribute to the socio-economic development of Algeria. The expected results are: a strengthened dialogue between migrant associations and local authorities effectively avoiding brain waste and de-skilling, well informed prospective Algerian migrants, facilitated integration of prospective migrants and Algerian emigrants in France and Italy in the labor-market, strengthened capacities of prospective migrants and returnees, strengthened links with Algerian emigrants in France and Italy, contributing to local socio-economic development and sustainability.

The project started in December 2009 with a first steering committee meeting, which defined the role of each partner and the agenda. It took place in Lecce Municipality, partner of the project. The meeting was very successful since it gave the opportunity to the partners of the project to get to know each other and exchange views about the actual situation of Algerian migrants, thanks to the presentation of the main Algerian partner, FACM. The future activities were planned and a common strategy was defined for the whole project.

The project is still ongoing and will end in Autumn 2010. It is the first pilot activity in the Med area and it was an excellent opportunity to strengthen existing relations with Algerian ALDA members and contacts and to start up new relations and work for future activities and strategies in the Med area.



Steering Committee meeting in Lecce (Italy), "Capitalize on Migrant Capacities", December 2009

## Pilot Projects in Med Area

### 1.7.18 ALDA lands in Morocco!

The Association of Local Democracy Agencies took part in a mission organized by Aix en Provence in Oujda, in Morocco from the 24th till the 29 November 2009. The mission clashed with a technical mission of Aix en Provence, which had the purpose of making the point on a project concerning the urban displacement of the town of Oujda. ALDA's participation had the purpose of offering its expertise on the associative context and on reinforcement of decentralization.

During the mission, the representatives from Aix en Provence and ALDA had the opportunity to meet the new municipal staff and to start a new cooperation and also to meet many stakeholders of the non profit sector. The meeting was successful since it allowed to collect information and define the further steps of the action. It was highlighted the action in Oujda of other French municipalities such as Lille, Champagne/Ardenne, Valenciennes and of Belgian ones: Forest et Mullbeck. The main mission's results were: deep knowledge of association sector and identified ways of cooperation with local authorities in Morocco, identified themes for a training for local authorities, identified potential means for the concertation and Citizen participation.

A second mission is foreseen for 2010, which will be dedicated to put in place the decisions undertaken in 2009. ALDA will have a strategic role as for the topics of decentralization of local governments and active citizenship.

The pilot mission in Morocco was definitely very useful to strengthen ALDA's commitment in the countries of the



Panorama of Oujda (Morocco) during the mission for the project, November 2009

Mediterranean area, where the Association is more and more active especially in the field of good governance and participation of citizens.

## Projects on Decentralized Cooperation

### 1.7.19 Decentralized cooperation programme between the Region Lower-Normandy (France) and the Republic of Macedonia

**Donor:** Region Lower Normandy and the French Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs

**Partner leader:** ALDA

The aim of the programme is to create and develop links between different stakeholders from Lower Normandy Region and the Republic of Macedonia and create a sustainable long-lasting cooperation by exchange of best practices. In order to assure this sustainability, the program includes variety of actors such as local authorities, associations, universities, public institutions and citizens. In terms of specific objectives, the project is highly ambitious and its main purposes focused on: developing opportunities for international cooperation for both territories involved promoting also the local governance by reinforcement of local authorities' capacities to implement decentralization.

The promotion of active local and European citizenship by mobilization of citizens in local initiatives and decision-making processes was also among the main aims, as well as help preparing the republic of Macedonia for EU accession by providing support in adopting the *aquis communautaire*.

It worth to mention that the cooperation between the French Region of Lower Normandy and Republic of Macedonia started already in 2007 and involved a wide range of activities and partners from both territories in several themes of the cooperation, such as: Information and communication technologies (ICT), the Youth sector involving education about local and European citizenship, Medias, Culture, Cultural heritage in the promotion of sustainable tourism and Agriculture and Economic Development.

In 2009 several activities were implemented, such as the study visit of Macedonian's mayors in Lower Normandy in June 2009 and an inventory of cultural heritage in Berovo, (Macedonia) in July 2009. A training on "Youth information" took place in Ohrid (Macedonia) in August 2009, followed by a Conference on cultural decentralization in Skopje (Macedonia) in September 2009. Another training was organized on renovation of old traditional houses in Mavrovo (Macedonia) and an international conference on new technology and media was held in Skopje (Macedonia), both in December 2009. In addition several study visits, debates, round tables and seminars in the topics related to the project were also successfully implemented.



The President of the Basse-Normandie Region, Mr. Beauvais, visits Macedonia, 6-8 July 2009

## Projects on Decentralized Cooperation

### 1.7.20 Decentralised cooperation France-Balkans 2009-2010

**Donor:** French Ministry of Foreign Affairs (France)

**Lead Partners:** Auvergne Regional Council (France)

**Partners:** in France: ALDA; Lower Normandy Regional Council, Belfort General Council, CRET Hautes-Alpes, SICALA Haute-Loire, Pays Vichy Auvergne and the cities of Nevers, Dijon, Epinal, Saint-Ouen and Saint Denis

The project on “Decentralised cooperation between France and the Balkans” is an interesting project of decentralised cooperation among local and regional authorities in a EU State and in the region of the Balkans. The French local authorities, led by the Auvergne Regional Council, decided to strengthen their cooperation with their respective partners in South-East Europe. ALDA’s task was to ensure the coordination of the partners and the project implementation on the ground.

The project supported the democratic processes in the Balkans aimed at leading to a stabilisation and pacification of the region. The project focused also on European integration processes for the Balkan states and encouraged the French local and regional authorities towards a neighbouring region in Europe. Those objectives were reached by, on one hand, networking actions such as conferences and workshops, and on the other with joint actions in fields of particular importance to the partners, either at multilateral or bilateral level.

A launching conference was held in Sarajevo on the 24<sup>th</sup> of September 2009, which was followed by three workshops. The first one, held in September focused on sustainable tourism and rural development. The second workshop held in November, addressed the topics of youth, citizenship and francophonie. The final one was held in December 2009 and aimed at raising awareness on medias and new technologies.



Visit to a network of model farms, Fojnica (Bosnia and Herzegovina), September 2009

An evaluation conference will be organized in 2010 about a potential renewal of the partners’ commitment to continue working on multilateral decentralised cooperation with a new project.

## Other Projects

### 1.7.21 Reconciling for the future – European perspective for the Western Balkans

**Supported by:** EU Commission, Instrument for Stability

**Lead Partner:** ALDA

**Partners:** LDA Central Serbia, LDA Mostar (Bosnia and Herzegovina), LDA Osijek (Croatia), Centre for peace and non-violence, Osijek (Croatia), Centre for regionalism, Novi Sad (Serbia)

This project supported the post-conflict reconciliation process between Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia with particular emphasis on assessing the achieved level and quality of inter-state relations towards EU integration. Based on participation of a widest possible range of key actors, the activities addressed several issues burdening the relations between Croat, Serb and Bosnian Muslim communities at different tiers of government within the respective countries, at bilateral/cross-border and multilateral level. Through a comprehensive set of activities, the project is intended both to improve the capacity of non-state actors operating at local and regional level for facilitating the post-conflict reconciliation on one hand, and to support their networking and co-ordination on the other hand.

Several activities were implemented and after the first steering committee group, which was gathered in Novi Sad (Serbia) to adopt the Action plan, a Country based panel discussion was held in Niš (Serbia) on the 4<sup>th</sup> of December. Around forty participants gathered at the first country ba-



Mrs Stanka Parac, ALDA Staff in charge for "Reconciling for the future", Subotica (Serbia), August 2009

sed panel on the role of state and non-state actors in Serbia in the post-conflict reconciliation process of the Western Balkans. Representatives of the Serbian government bodies, EU integration Office, Special Court for the war crimes, and a number of NGOs and local governments participated in the debate on this important regional process as one of the major preconditions for further EU integration of Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In the thematic panels part of the participants presented the work of different local initiatives aimed to support the process of reconciliation, involving local communities, experts and NGO networks. Particular mention was made of the "Igman" peace initiative (Serbia) connecting local governments and NGO-s from the war-affected regions, the on-going activities of the joint REKOM initiative connecting NGO-s and experts from Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as the need for establishing new co-operation networks connecting young people and youth groups to contribute to more effective reconciliation and inter-ethnic confidence building process.

An international call for written contributions for the publication will be prepared for the final regional conference that will take place in Zagreb in 2010.

## Other Projects

### 1.7.22 Regional Partnerships for Intercultural Exchange

**Supported by:** The European Commission, DG Enlargement – Regional Programmes

**Lead Partner:** Municipality of Subotica (Serbia)

**Partners:** France: ALDA, UK: Light House, Media Center, Wolverhampton, Serbia: LDA Subotica, Croatia: LDA Osijek, Bosnia and Herzegovina: LDA Mostar

Regional Partnerships for Intercultural Exchange was a two-year project, designed to involve local authorities and civil society organisations to supporting good local intercultural governance through more effective participation of civil society and minority communities. It aimed also



Mrs. Stanka Parac at the first Steering group for the CARDS project, Novi Sad (Serbia), September 2009

at strengthening networking among local NGOs involved in minority rights protection and at fostering exchange of good local practice in managing multiethnic local communities in the region. Finally the activities intended to promote innovative local practices in support to intercultural dialogue and tolerance.

A call for proposals “Support to civil society dialogue -‘People to people actions’: Consolidating partnerships between civil society organisations and public authorities for raising minority rights in the region” was launched in order to select the best projects, which were presented during the opening conference of the projects, which took place in July 2009, in Brussels, Belgium.

A project Steering group met the 6<sup>th</sup> August in Subotica, Serbia and gathered all the project partners in order to adopt the action plan and coordinate the activities at regional level. Among the activities implemented, the first round table was held in Subotica, Serbia on the 7<sup>th</sup> of August, titled: “Cherishing cultural heritage of national minorities” and gathered NGOs and local governments from Osijek (Croatia), Mostar (Bosnia and Herzegovina) and Szeged (Hungary) and was organized during the traditional celebration of harvest days in Subotica (Serbia).

An interactive debate was held on preservation of cultural heritage of national minorities and on their role in intercultural dialogue and understanding both at local and cross-border level, with particular emphasis on promoting cultural diversity, good practices in intercultural governance and on initiating new co-operation links between local communities in the region. In August 2009 a study visit was organized for thirty participants of the round table, during the cultural programme marking the harvest days.

To promote the project a webpage was created and an international call for written contributions on good local practice in intercultural governance, electronic newsletters was prepared and disseminated.

## Other Projects

### 1.7.23 Decentralisation and Local Governance in South Eastern Europe and Southern Caucasus

**Supported by:** Council of Europe, Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, Municipality of Shkodra (Albania), Albanian Association of Municipalities (AAM) and Local Democracy Agency Albania

A seminar on decentralisation and local governance in South Eastern Europe and Southern Caucasus took place in Shkodra on 2 and 3 November 2009 organised by the Association of Local Democracy Agencies (ALDA) and the Barcelona Provincial Council, promoted by the UCLG Decentralisation and Local Self-Government Committee. The event envisaged to focus on the role of local governments and the challenges they face within a wider framework of national legislative systems.

The two-day seminar included a series of thematic workshops to present comparative analyses and local practice as well as case studies based on the experts' and practitioners' overviews. The main topic was the future perspectives of the process of decentralization in the regions, which are undergoing profound reforms of the self-government system. In particular the following issues were debated: state models of decentralisation and the role of local governments; local government's efficiency in service provision and delivery; local sustainable development strategies; local government finances and fiscal decentralisation; citizen



Mr. Ciullo, Councillor of Brindisi (Italy), at the International seminar in Shkodra

participation in local policy and decision making; international decentralised and inter-municipal co-operation. Participants were invited to submit written contributions that will be published in a seminar publication together with the conclusions of the four thematic workshops.

Local elected representatives and representatives of associations of local governments, central government representatives, international experts and practitioners and partner organisations from South Eastern Europe and Southern Caucasus countries attended.

The final conclusions of the conference demonstrated that the example of South Eastern Europe also revealed mistakes in the implementation of the decentralisation reform that might be avoided in future in other region such as in the case of South Caucasus. The example of importing the model of small municipalities of some European Union Member States has not proven successful in some South Eastern Europe countries. Some of these countries, after a certain period of implementing the aforementioned model, reverted to the experience of the Communist period of relatively large basic units of self-government. Often,

ethnic factors and other elements rather than the efficiency principle, played a role in shaping the main units of decentralisation.

With regard to the situation in South Caucasus, the discussion at the conference revealed a certain improvement, especially in Georgia, although much remains to be done in the process of applying the European (including South European) standards of decentralisation. The participants of the representatives from Southern Caucasus highlighted the importance of exchanges of experiences and common capacity building processes in terms of local democracy and citizen participation.

The participants underlined the need of the governments of the SEE and Caucasus countries to commit themselves to further reforms towards better local government and identified key priorities, with a view to encouraging targeted, demand-driven support by the international community.

The participants highlighted the need to translate into concrete actions the principles adopted in international fora like the Council of Europe, with a particular reference to the Council of Europe Strategy on Innovation and Good Governance at the Local Level and the full implementation of the provisions of the European Charter on Local Self Government. Several key priorities crucial for local democracy reform in the region were singled out as important: capacity building of civil servants working in local government institutions; reinforcing democracy at the grass-roots level through increased participation of citizens in local public life and providing local authorities with resources adequate to the tasks which are allocated to them.

The Mayors and other participants of the conference committed themselves politically to the implementation of the "Work Programmes for Better Local Government" which were presented by the Stability Pact and the Council of Europe. ALDA declared its readiness to regularly review these

Work Programmes, in co-operation with the representatives of local authorities and the main international partners. The experience of European partners, present at the conference, was singled out as crucial for the development of solid and efficient local self-government in the two regions. In this context the crucial importance of decentralised international cooperation, underlying the experience of the LDAs, was recognized.

## Other Projects

### 1.7.24 ALDA: official partner of the Council of Europe for the Local Democracy Week

Since 2008 ALDA is official partner of the Council of Europe for the promotion of the Local Democracy Week throughout Europe. The Association was very committed in promoting the Week among its International network and encouraging its members to organize events at local level in their towns.

In particular ALDA itself contributed to organize a conference titled "Local democracy and participation of citizens" at the Youth Centre of Strasbourg, promoted by the City of

Strasbourg in cooperation with Inet, the Council of Europe. The aim of the meeting was to analyse the instruments of the Council of Europe in order to foster citizens' participation at local level and civic participation in general.

The event was very successful and gave the chance to the participants to exchange experiences about the steps undertaken by local authorities, included the town of Strasbourg, about methodologies of strengthening local democracy.

Another debate followed on the 15 October on the theme "Local democracy and citizen participation in Europe: why and for which goals? Which challenges for building Europe?". This round table was very useful in order to develop a common reflection about the twelve principles of the Strategy of innovation and good governance of the Council of Europe, among which the citizen participation is fundamental.



Round table on local democracy and citizens participation, Strasbourg, 15<sup>th</sup> October 2009

## Other Projects

### 1.7.25 Istria Communicating Europe

**Donor:** European Commission

**Partner leader:** Foundation for Partnership and civil society development, Croatia

**Partners:** Croatia: Region Istria, Suncokret, Zum, and Infor-  
mo; France: Association of Local Democracy Agencies

The project **Istria Communicating Europe** aimed at broadening the knowledge and understanding of the European Union and the process of European integration in general among Croatian citizens. The project I.C.E. intended to contribute to achieve this goal through several actions: widening the knowledge and information of the target groups about the EU and the understanding of European integration process; promoting European priority themes - European Citizenship, Intercultural dialogue and Volunteering; arising citizens' interest in and need for information about the EU through activities of facilitation of the access to the existing sources of information and creation of new ones; familiarize the target groups with available EU programmes and pre-accession funds for Croatia; analyzing the opinion of the citizens about the EU issues to address correctly the future regional policies.

The partnership includes the most relevant stakeholders of the civil society in the Istria region and a transnational partner. It promoted an open-minded approach to all the target groups and joint efforts for combating any anti-EU attitudes. The partners were: Foundation for partnership and civil society development as the main institution for the development of Civil society in the Istria region; Suncokret, a regional NGO for community development with a long-lasting experience in activities from high schools and Youth; Zum, a regional NGO for promotion of employment



ICE Project, study visit of young students in  
Vicenza (Italy), 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> June 2009

and professional improvement; the Association of Local Democracy Agencies in its capacity of international NGO at EU level; Infor-  
mo, a regional NGO for fostering employment, professional improvement and education.

As Partner it is included also the Region of Istria as it is the key institution in Istria dealing with EU issues and projects and the most active and competent Croatian region in international cooperation and European integration. The main results of the project were: an enhanced citizens, in particular youngsters, knowledge about EU values and opportunities; arisen citizens' interest in EU policies and need for EU related news and events Increased awareness of the citizens of the Region Istria about the results of EU policies on the territory; promoted EU priority themes in Croatia; citizens familiarized with available programmes of international assistance and cooperation in particular way the EU programs that are available to Croatian citizens.

Among many activities implemented by the partners, Alda was in charge of organizing on 15 and 16 June a study visit in Vicenza, Italy, which gave the participants the opportunity to meet local stakeholders active in EU issues, e.g. Vicenza municipality and the Association Eurocultura.

## Other Projects

### 1.7.26 IPA Adriatic CBC programme: a database for ALDA members and partners

The IPA Adriatic CBC, financed by the European Union, presents great opportunities for ALDA, since it promotes integration of Western Balkans countries into the EU, especially through linking the communities around the Adriatic. It is the result of a joint programming work carried out by the relevant participating countries and is part of the cooperation process in the Adriatic area.

The Programme draws its strength and incisiveness from the wide experience, gained during the previous Programme period producing concrete results from the studies and

analysis financed in the past. During 2009, following the first call for proposals launched by the Programme, ALDA and the Adriatic Euroregion have been in touch and gathered several project proposals, ideas and drafted projects from different organizations and institutions.

For this purpose ALDA and the Adriatic Euroregion built a database on ALDA website as a service aiming at fostering cooperation and quality of actions. The site gathered several project proposals, ideas and drafted projects from different organizations and institutions, to be submitted within the IPA CBC programme. In this way, those working on the same topics and with the same partners had the opportunity of merging their efforts and create synergies on specific areas. The database is still on ALDA website and offers an interesting opportunity for ALDA members and partners to networking in order to develop joint projects.



The map shows the eligible programme area of IPA Adriatic CBC Programme.

## Other Projects

### 1.7.27 Microcredit – a supporting scheme for South Eastern Europe

**Donor:** Norwegian Ministry of Foreign affairs

**Partner Leader:** ALDA

**Partners:** LDAs



 **Banca Intesa**

**INTESA**  **SANPAOLO**

 **INTESA SANPAOLO BANKA**

 **PRIVREDNA  
BANKA  
ZAGREB**

  
**NORWEGIAN MINISTRY  
OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

Microcredit project has the goal to introduce an integrated approach to microcredit with a goal of promotion of start-up businesses, job-creation, promoting local economic development in the countries of South Eastern Europe, starting with Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and to contribute to the creation of new employment opportunities in these countries and to help the overall economic and social recovery of the region.

The first two years have been devoted to working out the legal framework, creating working plans, liaising with local authorities, banks, conducting preliminary market surveys, training of the dedicated LDA staff. In the third year, material advancement was made towards execution.

Now being in the phase of implementation of the third year, it can be said that it has entered the execution stage. The progress reached in the three target countries varies, for objective reasons, while it is on track everywhere.

The agreements have been signed between the three regional offices (Zagreb, Belgrade and Sarajevo) of Intesa bank and all the LDAs.. Lending conditions do vary between the banks, and this is due to the diversity of the target markets.

None of the competitive microfinance projects can offer such long tenors as the ALDA's one do (including the very recently launched program of the Serbian government), grace periods as we do, and our interest rate is also below the market level. This has been possible due the funding obtained from the Council of Europe Development Bank, and the good knowledge of the local market by the LDAs and by the Intesa bank. Notably, the LDAs are located in direct proximity to the local markets and have daily contacts with the customers.

As results, the project in Serbia started operating at the end of 2008, and is already well advanced with sufficient amount of customers, which will allow ALDA soon to look into the ways to make it self-sustainable. In Croatia the project is still merely at the marketing stage but results are to

be very promising. During the summer LDAs and ALDA have visited a number of Croatian municipalities to obtain their support and interest in the project, with positive results. In the municipality of Verteneglio and Umag, a 2% subvention has been granted to the project by the local authorities.

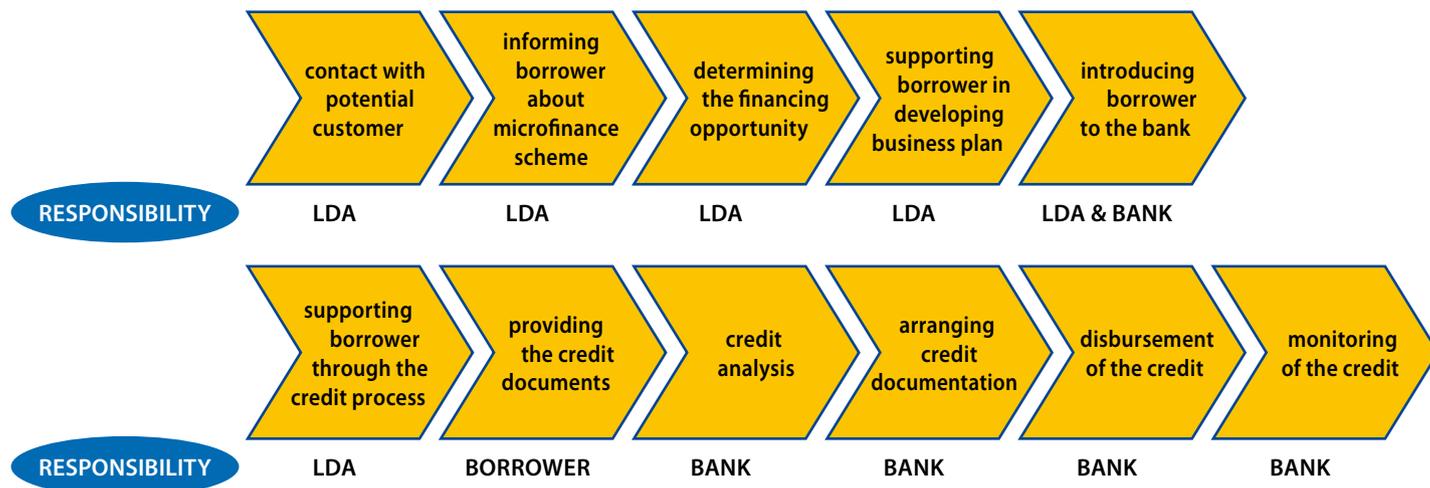
LDAs are holding information meetings with the entrepreneurs and local authorities, while the financial results are still to come. In turn, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as this market is the most saturated with various microcredit programs, it took time to work out the competitive conditions for the project. From another point of view, full-scale launch of our project was delayed due to financial crisis, as when the crisis hit, it took times for the bank to evaluate their financial situation and review their retail lending policies. Now that the economies are projected to pick up in 2010, banks' interest is returning, and ALDA considers its project well positioned for the growth.

Overall process is based on very close link between the LDAs and the local branches of the bank. This is the flowchart of the process:

The whole process is structured in a way that LDAs take care of the borrowers from the beginning till the moment

when they become regular clients of the bank. This process is very complex since it involves lots of operational and logistic work: looking for the borrowers, explaining the way the project can be useful to them, which includes often nurturing their basic financial skills, helping to develop their business plan, helping to fill in the credit documentation, and accompanying them to the bank to present them to the loan officers. As evident from the scheme above, the whole process takes substantial efforts from the LDA staff - it requires lots of meetings, both general, when general information is given simultaneously to up to 50 entrepreneurs and bilateral, when possibilities of each potential borrower is discussed.

Many potential borrowers have never had experience with financial projects and this opportunity is very challenging for them and for the benefit of the involved countries. It is worth to say that in Subotica, out of total 37 applications, 12 have been submitted by women, which speak positively as to whether ALDA is on the way its goal of achieving social equality in the regional entrepreneurship. Together they have processed applications for ca Euro 2 millions. These are really good results and they bring optimism as to what to expect from the project in Croatia and Bosnia Herzegovina.



## Other Projects

### 1.7.28 E-FoR: Education for Remembrance

**Donor:** European Commission

**Leader Partner:** ALDA

**Partners:** Jasenovac memorial site and Local Democracy agency Sisak from Croatia, Mémorial Cité de l'Histoire Caen Normandie from France, Municipality of Nardo from Italy, the Institute for National History –Macedonia, the Junction – from Northern Ireland.

In the framework of *Europe for Citizens Programme*, Action 4, ALDA is implementing, as a leader, the project E-FoR: Education for Remembrance. The project involves several partners from different countries, which all contributed to create a multi-faceted approach to education for remembrance.



Jasenovac Memorial Site (Croatia) hosted a five-days seminar on E-FoR project, February 2010

The project, started in October 2009 will last 12 months. It aims to serve a double purpose: on one side to foster the education on human rights and active European citizenship and, on the other side, to increase the knowledge about the events of the Second World War. The project aims to emphasize the importance of historical sites that are fundamental from a remembrance perspective but that are not so well-known by the general public and to give a wider and deeper overview into the Nazi-fascist page in European history.

The first three months of the project were dedicated to the preparation phase: scheduling the activities, networking, communication among the partners. The first event will be a five-days Seminar, planned for February 2010, which will be hosted by Jasenovac Memorial Site. It will be addressed to educators, teachers, youth workers, researchers, experts and will focus on the elaboration of new strategies for remembrance education. Other events at local level will follow, as the production of an educational booklet.

All these initiatives are expected to lead to an increased capability in the organization of events by the partners as well as a network for sharing experiences and resources in the field of memorial sites preservation. The goal is also to generate a wider debate on remembrance, human rights and solidarity across the whole Europe.

## Other Projects

### 1.7.29 Seenet 2: a trans local network for cooperation between Italy and South East Europe

**Institutional actors:** Italy: Region Emilia Romagna and ERVET; Region Friuli Venezia Giulia and INFORMEST; Region Marche; Region Piedmont; Region Veneto; Autonomous Province of Trento;

**Non-institutional actors:** Italy: CeSPI; Balkans Observatory; France; ALDA

REGIONE  
TOSCANA



ISTARSKA  
ŽUPANIJA



REGIONE  
ISTRIANA



REGIONE  
MARCHE



REGIONE  
DEL VENETO



PROVINCIA  
AUTONOMA  
DI TRENTO



REGIONE  
PIEMONTE



REGIONE AUTONOMA  
FRIULI VENEZIA GIULIA

 Regione Emilia-Romagna

**Local partners:** Albania: Skadar district, municipalities of Skadar, Elbasan and Valona; Bosnia and Herzegovina; Cantons of Sarajevo, Tuzla, Herzegovina Neretva, Zenica-Doboj; municipalities of Livno, Nevesinje, Prijedor, Sanski Most, Trebinje, Tuzla, Zavidovići, Hadžići, Pale, Travnik, Trnovo, Rep. Srpska Trnovo, Zenica, Stari Grad (Sarajevo); cities of Sarajevo and Mostar; Serbia: Cities of Kragujevac, Nis and Novi Sad; Municipalities of Vozdovac and Lazarevac (Belgrade), Pančevo, Smederevo; Autonomous Province of Vojvodina; Croatia: Regions Istria, Vukovarsko-srijemska, Osiječko-baranjska, Dubrovačko-neretvanska; cities of Pazin, Rovinj, Varaždin, town of Brtonigla/Verteneglio, Kosovo: Municipalities of Pec/Peja and Pristina; Macedonia: City of Skopje; Montenegro: Municipalities of Niksic, Budva, Kotor.

From 2009 till 2013, ALDA will be a strategic partner of the Seenet programme on the topic of governance and participatory democracy.

In 2007, the Region of Tuscany has promoted an initiative named Seenet Bridge – A network of cooperation among local governments for development and dialogue in South Eastern Europe with the aim to follow the important results obtained with the first phase of the Seenet program, finished in the summer of 2006. The successful conclusion of Seenet, in fact, has highlighted the contribution that the decentralized cooperation can give to post-conflict reconstruction and peace processes. The project has been able to create moments of dialogue and aggregation, in a network among communities separated by war, through the involvement of local authorities in concrete actions for the development. These results and developments that may arise are now more than ever, an important starting point for achieving an effective integration of the Balkan countries in the European Union.

Through the initiative Seenet Bridge it was possible to identify the present project, named Seenet 2, which was approved and financed by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This