



# Local Democracy Centre LDA Activity Report

## 2014

## A New Beginning

by Marinkov Sasa, LDA delegate

2014. was a year of many changes for LDA. Most notably, we got a new host town, reallocated our headquarters from Niš to Knjaževac and welcomed some new people to our team. With the support from ALDA we have closed one and open a new chapter for LDA, with new energy, new ideas, new partnerships and new possibilities.

Throughout 2013 we undertook a complex process of analyzing and reassessing the situation of LDA in Niš. By the end of 2013 this resulted in a proposal for the strategy of further development of LDA that was presented to the ALDA Bureau and our partners for further comments and approval at the beginning of 2014. After a positive feedback we have approached Municipality of Knjaževac, which previously proved to be very proactive and open for cooperation, and started talks on raising the cooperation with LDA and ALDA to the next level. Being strategically interested for international

decentralized cooperation it was easily agreed by both sides that Knjaževac could benefit from cooperation with LDA and ALDA so a process of re-launching LDA started. During the month of April basic preconditions were fulfilled for reallocation of LDA to Knjaževac. Municipality of Knjaževac provided premises for our headquarter office and became our new host town. The office itself was officially opened in October during a visit from our Secretary General, Antonella Valmorbida, and Regional Programmes Coordinator, Stanka Parac Damjanovic, for the occasion of official signing of Letter of Intent for cooperation between our network and Municipality of Knjaževac. With this Letter of Intent Municipality of Knjaževac confirmed further its commitment to operate as the host city to the Local Democracy Centre – LDA, providing necessary conditions for co-operation based on projects development, and became full-fledged member of The Association of Local Democracy Agencies – ALDA.



### Reallocation of LDA

With the aim of spreading its program to the territories in need, in April 2014, LDA reallocated its headquarters to Knjaževac, city in South Eastern Serbia



### Knjaževac becomes host city for LDA and joins ALDA network

ALDA's Secretary General, Antonella Valmorbida, and Vice Mayor, Dr Ljubica Nikolic, upon signing Letter of Intent

# KNJAŽEVAC

## New host city of LDA

LDA's new host town, Knjaževac, is a town and municipality situated in South-eastern Serbia, in the region bordering Bulgaria. The municipality extends over an area of 1202 km<sup>2</sup> and is the fourth largest in the Republic of Serbia. The town itself is located in the valley, at the confluence of two rivers, but countryside of whole municipality is mostly hilly and mountainous. The municipality has a population of 30,902 inhabitants who live in 86 inhabited places, one town and 85 villages. Knjaževac is categorized as municipality in the category IV, which means it is one of least developed in Serbia and this justifies even more so the need for LDA to be active in this area.

Knjaževac used to be a location for big exporting factories but today it is developing towards more tourist area that utilizes its countryside (park of nature, several historic sites, ski resort and a spa). Main existing industries are:

- Clothing and footwear industry

- Furniture and timber industry
- Food and Beverage, Agriculture (fruit production)
- Rural tourism

Knjaževac has a well-developed system of social services with quite a few innovative social services in the community financed by the local authorities (municipality is known for this feature on a regional and national level).

Several cultural festivals take place every year in Knjazevac: national Festival of Youth Culture of Serbia and Festival of Etno Associations (national);

several local festivals of traditional culture and food. Knjaževac is part of the Road of Wine of Serbia. National sport manifestations (ski and extreme sports) are taking place annually since several years ago. Land Museum is managing several historical sites and has a rich collection of artifacts dating from pre-historical age, thru Roman Empire to the world unique collection of special wool socks that are part of the national costume, very colorful.

[www.knjazevac.rs](http://www.knjazevac.rs)

[www.toknjazevac.org.rs](http://www.toknjazevac.org.rs)



This past year has also brought new opportunities for LDA not only to strengthen existing but also to build some new partnerships with stakeholders both on local and international level:



Youth Office, Land Museum, City Library, schools and Development Agency of Knjaževac Municipality, Patrimoine sans frontières - France, Margherita Societa' Cooperativa Sociale a r.l. - Italy, Soziokulturelle Initiative Erfurt e.V. - Germany...



All throughout 2014 LDA has continued with the implementation of specific activities within the following projects:

\* **Increase Your Employability Through Working In Tourism**, EVS project with RIC Bela Krajina from Slovenia, where LDA acted as partner sending organization for two volunteers;



\* **Coordinating Trentino con i Balcani office in Kraljevo**, where LDA supported the work of Tavolo's coordinator in Serbia;

\* **Application successful, Europe for Citizens project of Europa Haz from Budapest**, where LDA as locally engaged partner promoted project activities for the benefit of current and potential stakeholders of the Europe for Citizens Programme in Nis and Knjazevac, supported organization of two trainings and took part in a study visit to German NGOs in Berlin;



\* **Local Coalitions For Community Development**, ALDA project supported thru IPA funds for Montenegro, where LDA acted as partner involved in subgranting and training component of the project.



In our role as resource for active citizenship initiatives both for local authorities and citizens, LDA has provided support to:

\* **Knjaževac Municipality for their participation in the project "Bet On Eu"**, project funded thru Europe for Citizens programme,



\* **Women's Cooperative - ZAdrugarice** in their formal registration and first activities in promoting small business initiatives of women from Nis and surrounding areas.



## What's ahead of us?

Besides regular joint project development, priorities for the upcoming period, after securing local stability of LDA, will be:

\* To support establishment of new partnerships between Knjaževac and EU municipalities, also members of ALDA. At the same time this will contribute to the much needed renewing of LDAs partner network as well. This is surely a challenging task but good ground has been set during previous year so we look to future with optimism.



\* To continue to cooperate closely with Balkan LDAs, with the support of ALDA office in Skoplje, in developing regional initiatives. Our joint efforts have already given positive results with the EU supported Regional platform for youth participation and dialogue and other opportunities are appearing at the horizon. It is true what they say: where there is unity there is always victory.



Local  
Democracy  
Centre  
LDA  
Activity  
Report

2014

Sretena Markovica 9  
19350 Knjazevac, Serbia

[LDACSS@aldaintranet.org](mailto:LDACSS@aldaintranet.org)

DEVELOPING LOCAL DEMOCRACY  
PROMOTING CITIZEN PARTICIPATION  
EMPOWERING CITIZENS, CSOs & LOCAL AUTHORITIES