

Local Democracy Agencies in Serbia

LDA Subotica and LDA Central and Southern Serbia



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LDA CSS PARTNERS

Lead partner: City of Suresnes (France), City of Nis - host city, Reggio Emilia (Italy), Municipality of Vefsen (Norway), Municipality of Saltdal (Norway), Municipality of Hemnes (Norway), Tavolo Trentino per la Serbia (Italy), Association of LDA Zavidovici (BiH), Cites Unies de France, City of Kragujevac (Serbia), City of Kraljevo (Serbia), City of Leskovac (Serbia), Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities of Serbia

LDA SUBOTICA PARTNERS

Lead partner: Wolverhampton City Council (UK), City of Subotica—host city, Minority Rights Group Fauske and Nordland Municipality (Norway), Buskerud County Council (Norway), Euro-regional Centre for Democracy-Timisoara (Romania), Minority self-government Seged, Local Governance Institute LGI Budapest (Hungary)

LDA Subotica and LDACSS were established within the Local Democracy Programme supported by the Council of Europe, through the activities of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities.

Both LDAs operate within the network of 12 Local Democracy Agencies, located mainly in the countries of Western Balkans, in Verteneglio, Sisak, Osijek, Mostar, Zavidovici, Prijedor, Niksic, Gijlan, Ohrid, Subotica, Nis and one in Caucasus, Kutaisi, Georgia.

We represent European communities, regions and NGOs joined together with an aim to promote networking between local communities and programs in the regions of former Yugoslavia in their process of transition towards European Union.

Together with the Association of the Local Democracy Agencies, we are working on fostering democratic, social, cultural and economical development of the region following the principles of solidarity, human rights and freedom.



The **LDA Subotica** was opened in 1993. It was the first LDA established in the programme. The Agency is based in multiethnic and multicultural region of Vojvodina.

Recent main activities of the LDA Subotica included:

1. Capacity building – Workshops in management of local self-government
2. Reconciliation – Experts' meetings, surveys, and publications to strengthen inter-ethnic dialogue and tolerance
3. Trans-border co-operation
 - Training seminars for young political leaders on best practices
 - Projects between Vojvodina and counties in Croatia, Hungary and Romania
4. Environmental protection and sustainable development
 - A series of publications in Serbian and English



The **LDA Central and Southern Serbia (LDACSS)** was established in 2001. The LDA covers the whole region by working in four cities: Nis, Kraljevo, Leskovac and Kragujevac.

The LDACSS is currently working mainly on the following topics:

1. Capacity building – Workshops in management of local self-government
2. Local economic development
3. Environmental issues, in particular waste management
4. Media issues - training of young journalists
5. Youth empowerment
6. Social welfare issues
7. Trans-border co-operation



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PARTNER MEETINGS

with the support of



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LDA SUBOTICA PARTNERS' MEETING

14 -15 September 2007. in Subotica



Local Democracy Agency organised the Fifth Annual Partners' meeting held in Subotica on 14th-15th September with the participation of LDA partners, Wolverhampton City Council (lead Partner), Buskerud County Council, Fauske and Nordland municipal councils (Norway) and the host city authorities. The programme of the visit to Subotica included meetings in Local Economic Development Office and Business Incubator as well as in the neighbourhood community centre and with the civil society organisations. Co-operation programme with recently established local institutions in Subotica were the main topic of meetings, while particular focus was on: local cross-sectoral partnerships for economic development opportunities and youth volunteers' exchange within EU Youth in Action Programme. As agreed in the meeting, chaired this time by Mr. Bjarne Stabak, Senior Adviser in Buskerud County Council, a new Action plan of LDA would therefore include jointly

developed projects aimed at capacity building for local civil society and local authorities through exchange programmes with partner cities in the above mentioned areas. Furthermore, LDA Subotica will be included in co-operation programme between Norwegian and Serbian municipalities in support to local implementation of different initiatives, including co-operation between Fauske and Melenci, and co-operation between Buskerud County and Subotica municipality. This meeting was a farewell meeting for Ms. Julia Speht, who has been seconded to the Regional Development Agency in Birmingham, but whose efforts resulted in numerous contacts between Wolverhampton and Subotica, including our new partner in EU Youth in Action programme: Wolverhampton Volunteer Centre.

LDACSS PARTNERS' MEETING

25 May 2007, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina



This year's LDACSS Partner Meeting was held on 25th May in the City of Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The meeting was organized by LDACSS in cooperation with its leading partner, the City of Suresnes, France and ALDA with the support from the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe, Office in Thessaloniki. Present partners included: Tavolo Trentino con la Serbia, Italy, Reggio nel Mondo, Municipality of Reggio Emilia, Italy, Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities, Serbia, City of Nis, Serbia, City of Kragujevac, Serbia and following potential partners: Business Innovation Program, Norway and Municipality of Bgdposke, Poland.

Partner Meeting was the opportunity for LDACSS national and international partners to get acquainted with LDACSS activities since last partner meeting as well as with the activities planned for the following period of 2007. We seized this opportunity to encourage closer future trans-border cooperation within our international partner network thru projects of mutual interest. After a fruitful exchange of ideas and propositions of present partners following conclusions were made:

- There is a new élan, sense of partnership and willingness among present partners for further cooperation within LDACSS network
- New approach to cooperation presented during this meeting got a positive response with present LDACSS partners; the idea of setting up a shared and multiparty activity in the process of project definition presents improvement in the work of LDACSS
- This new approach sharpens the vision of LDACSS work for future by bringing new clearer positioning of LDACSS in the actions of cooperation among LDACSS partners (role of coordinator on the field of cooperation activities between partners)
- LDACSS and Serbian Cities will continue with further defining truly relevant joint priorities that would be presented to European partners for possible cooperation.

CURRENT EU SUPPORTED PROJECTS



Local Partnerships for Tolerance

EU supported project (EIDHR Programme)



LDA Subotica is implementing the EU supported project Local Partnerships for Tolerance (2007/2008) intended for improving interethnic dialogue and tolerance through improved citizen participation at local level. The main beneficiaries are the local civil society organisations and neighbourhood community centres in Subotica municipality. The project activities include Round Table on intercultural tolerance in Subotica, capacity building on diversity management, training for trainers, establishing innovative forms of citizen participation in neighbourhood communities, publishing a Guide for intercultural tolerance for local elected/appointed councilors and civil society organisations. Our main priority is to improve cross-sectoral co-operation and help establish effective partnerships at the level of neighbourhood community centres – the tier of local government closest to citizens. Improving knowledge and skills for diversity management, European standards in human/minority rights, creation of innovative forms of consultation and citizen participation are among the main objectives of our project.

The Round Table on Intercultural Tolerance (held at the end of August) gathered around 40 participants – representatives of local government and a number of local institutions and civil society organisations and was seen as an opportunity for establishing a direct and permanent forum for citizen consultation facilitated by the Local Democracy Agency. A number of recommendations have been put forward in regard with the need to improving the work of the Municipal Council for Interethnic Relations, as a recently established local elected body in the following areas:

- Conflict prevention and resolution
- Active promotion of tolerance and respect for diversity
- Encouraging intercultural dialogue and understanding
- Consultation with civil society and national minority communities on intercultural tolerance and minority rights in local community



In September and October activities continued with the analysis of the survey on citizen participation in neighbourhood communities and one-week Training for Trainers seminar – Capacity building for community centres: Diversity management skills for local elected/appointed councillors and civil society groups. Currently, one-day trainings in five neighbourhood community centres are in progress. The trainings were conducted by **Prof. Eamonn O'Kane**, Senior Lecturer on Conflict Management, Head of the Department of the University of Wolverhampton (UK) **topics:** sources of conflicts in local community; methods of conflict prevention and resolution; EU standards of human/minority rights protection; good governance – from standards to local implementation; innovative forms of citizen consultation;

A new network of trainers for neighbourhood community centres in Subotica was initiated and the mailing list established. The best local practices they presented during the training programme will be incorporated in the Guide on Intercultural Tolerance.

TOGETHER—THE BALKANS IN EUROPE, EUROPE IN THE BALKANS EU supported project (CARDS Media Programme)



After the war in the Balkans, contacts between journalists remain difficult, stereotypes are widespread and many journalists lack a fundamental education. The aim of this project implemented by **LDACSS** is to improve the quality of journalism in the Balkans and to foster co-productions between the different countries/entities. This will be achieved with the help of experts from Strasbourg based TV ARTE journalists who will accompany four young journalists from Serbia, Kosovo/UMNIK and FYRMacedonia in the production of four 20-minute documentaries applying typical TV ARTE methodology of the cross-cultural view in order to achieve a fresh view on the topics and to avoid stereotypes.

During the months of June, July and August four young journalists produced documentaries with the following topics:

- Nationalism and culinary issues in the Balkans
- Environmental issues around the Ohrid Lake
- The Resolution SCR UN 1325, women, peace and security, Serbia/Kosovo
- Dance as a radiography of Serb and Kosovar society

We are currently in the final phases of the postproduction activities. Some of the documentaries have been already shown in different film festivals (the Caravana 4 Festival in Strasbourg being one of them). The project will be finished off in December by the distribution of a DVD containing the four documentaries and practical guide with information on co-productions in the Balkans.



CURRENT ACTIVITIES

EU Youth Info point and EVS Programme of LDA Subotica



Since July 2007., LDA Subotica is an accredited organisation within European Volunteer Service (EVS) Programme – sending, hosting and co-ordinating organisation. In partnership with Wolverhampton Volunteer Centre a collaborative project proposal is being developed for exchange of volunteers between Subotica and Wolverhampton (deadline February 2008) In addition LDA Subotica is a local partner organisation for EU Youth in Action Programme with SEE Youth net (Training for trainers programme – Livno, Bosnia and Herzegovina) and ALDA local partner in implementing EU Youth Programme.

LDA Office is currently creating a data basis of potential volunteers and local institutions and organisations that will be included in the activities planned for 2008. Local Youth Programmes co-ordinator is Ms. Olga Perusic (contact: ldasubotica@aldaintranet.org)

Kolibri: Joint project of the City of Suresnes, City of Kragujevac and LDACSS



From 5th till 8th October 2007, the City of Suresnes, LDACSS leading partner, organized a traditional city festivity, Vine festival. LDACSS staff together with the other official delegation from Serbia, Germany, Spain and Israel was welcomed on this splendid event which is organized once a year.

Seizing the opportunity of this festivity, LDACSS staff together with the official delegation of the City of Kragujevac, lead by Mr. Dobrica Milovanovic, president of City Assembly, and the delegation of the City of Suresnes, lead by Mr. Jean Loup Dujardin, head of the Department for city policy and social cohesion, had several meetings during the period of 8-10th of October, in order to define further steps for the project "Kolibri" that is currently being implemented in Kragujevac with the support of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs. After a complete reconstruction of "Kolibri" kindergarten and its play-yard, in the following phases this project aims to

accomplish better social inclusion of Roma families from the kindergarten neighborhood into preschool programs of this kindergarten.

Following the presentation of current status of the project, this working group jointly defined objectives, problems and time frame for future activities within "Kolibri" project.

Plans for joint activities of Saltal Commune, City of Nis and LDACSS



Continuing 20 years long cooperation, official delegation of Saltal Commune, Norway visited the City of Nis and LDACSS office on 25th and 26th September 2007. Official programme of the visit included a meeting of the representatives of the City of Nis and LDACSS staff with the Mayor of Saltal Commune, Mr. Kjell Magne Johanson, and his associates Ms. Christin Kristensen, Chief Executive and Ms. Ana Velle, Secretary of the Municipal Executive. This meeting was the opportunity to present several proposals of projects of cooperation between Saltal, Nis and LDACSS to our guests from Norway. Presented project proposals were prepared with joint efforts of the City of Nis officials and LDACSS staff.

Mr. Johanson and his associates expressed their interest to be part of those projects adding that Saltal Municipality could surely contribute with the exchange of experience, knowledge and competence in these projects. It was agreed that at this moment it would be best to concentrate just on one of those projects: the project about youth with disabilities and adjusting and organising school and work places for this group. This project idea will be presented to a number of Saltal municipal employees who work within this field so that all three sides can continue to work together in order to finalize project proposal and to apply for possible funding.

Activities of LDACSS youth activists



Being one of over 20 partners on the EU funded project 'Youth-the right direction' LDACSS had its participants at several seminars organized within the scope of this project that aims at enhancing the promotion and visibility of the Youth programme in South Eastern Europe (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia) and Caucasus (Georgia).

Based on the knowledge gained on seminars mentioned earlier, LDACSS youth activists did some preliminary work about setting up of the Youth info point in Nis that will be managed by 10 youth ambassadors and LDACSS staff. Their main tasks would be distribution of information about youth at local, national and international level, European issues, Youth in Action Programme, drafting projects, European voluntary services, study and work opportunities, etc.

Our youth activists already comprised a data base with useful Web site addresses ; the library is being formed with various booklets, brochures and books on different target issues; the survey of the secondary education students and university students has been conducted so far in order to find out what the interests are of the young and who is eligible to become the ambassador; the pre-training of the ambassadors has been planned.

The conclusion of the research is that many young people are interested in the whole idea of having a space for youth and their issues because there is no such thing in the City of Niš. The positive response to this survey also resulted in the data base of e-mail addresses which would be used for distribution of the information. Thus, this resulted in LDACSS staff going even further together with the group of enthusiasts. We are currently developing the possibilities of extending the info-point by having Info Center, EU Club, Project Center and Volunteer Center within the original info-point which would be named Youth Center. The activities of original info-point would just be divided into separate departments which would also work together but the tasks would be more defined and organized.

Local Democracy Agency Subotica Local Democracy Agency for Central and Southern Serbia LDACS Established by Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Council of Europe Members of the Association of the Local Democracy Agencies



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