**Elisabeth Gateau,
Secretary General - United Cities and Local Government (Barcelona)**

Ms Gateau presented the World Organisation of Cities and Regions, a new organisation and the successor of the two preceding organisations: 3,000 Mayors met in Paris in May 2004 to create it and to launch its programmes.

"The setting up of the Convention had been done in an open process thanks to new technologies and online presentation of the entire work"

Elisabeth Gateau

Before being involved in this organisation, Ms Gateau was a member of the Secretariat of the European Constitution. She was involved in the setting up of the Convention, which - as she explained - was a very unusual work: 15 member states and 10 candidate countries, an open process thanks to new technologies and an online presentation of the entire work of the Convention. She stressed the fact that it could not have been possible to realise this in 16 months without these tools.

A section of the Convention website was open to civil society, visitors could share their approach and try to influence the members of the Convention. She underlined the transparency in the drafting process of the Constitution. However, it was a juridical process so it was not so easy for the civil society to grasp all the issues. Ms Gateau pointed out that the article 6 of the Convention is dedicated to the civil society: it gives tools to the civil society for its participation (frequent consultation and transparency).

Finally, she explained that for the United Nations, this aspect is also important: they issued the "Cardoso Report" on the theme of the civil society and how the UN could open more its institutions to civil society.

Jaume Saura, Director of the Institute of Human Rights in Catalonia

Mr Saura presented the role and the objectives of the Institute: to enhance the rights of the citizens to participate and to give them the means to enjoy these rights. He described particularly three rights:
- political participation is the right to be consulted, right to understand who is in charge of what in public affairs;
- the right to have a political space for meeting;
- the right to information: access to new technologies as a mean to foster the participation of citizens.

The Institute of Human Rights in Catalonia was one of the instigators of the European Charter for the Safeguarding of Human Rights in the Cities. More than 235 cities from 21 European countries have signed the document and thus confirmed their intention to make human rights a guideline of their municipal policies.

The Charter aims at implementing human rights for all citizens, regardless of their origin, and to enable participation of all people in civic life.

Article VIII of the Charter declares the Right of Political Participation and Article XXIV refers to the Principle of Openness of the administrative process.

Geza Kucera, Mayor of Subotica (Serbia-Montenegro)

Mr Kucera presented his city, which hosts the LDA Subotica, in Voivodina. Subotica is a mix of populations from different countries.

He stressed the importance of letting everybody express their own views. Different legal measures were taken in February 2002 to strengthen the citizens' participation and to set up a local self-government according to European standards.

He highlighted that the Municipality supports different civil society groups. The City provides also an information service for the citizens and tries to foster trans-border cooperation on a regional level. Finally, Mr Kucera underlined the important role the LDAs are playing in the improvement of the participation of civil society.

Wiggo Lauritzen, Chief Municipal Executive, City of Fauske (Norway)

1. Openness and the right to free speech are deeply rooted in Norwegian democracy

'Effective long-term administration is to a large degree dependant upon the individuals' and the local community's acceptance of regulations'

Wiggo Lauritzen

Mr. Lauritzen stressed that openness and the right to free speech are deeply rooted in Norwegian democracy. Since the time of the Vikings, when the people first gathered to resolve disputes in a democratic fashion, individuals have been able to contribute their opinion of how the community as a whole should be governed; and democracy and local government continue to exist under society's critical gaze. Openness in government and (civil) administration has varied throughout Norway's history and was greatly strengthened by the 1972 'Law on Openness in Administration'.

The Norwegian people's right to gain insight into and participate in the administration and government has been secured ever since through legislation. In accordance with these laws, the public's right to access published information and gain insight into the workings of government encompasses all areas, excluding only the protection of personal privacy and matters of national security.

Furthermore, Mr Lauritzen explained when and where the inclusion of civil society in the decision-making process should be fostered. To him, this participation is particularly interesting in areas that can be difficult to administer if the regions' users and those affected by the decision do not find the regulation meaningful and legitimate (environmental, regional planning and development issues). Indeed, effective long-term administration is to a large degree dependant upon the individuals' and the local community's acceptance of regulations.

The Chief Municipal Executive of Fauske described in details a situation in which the inclusiveness of civil society was more than useful: protection regulations of Junkerdal National Park. He explained the difficulties to strengthen the protection laws of this area where community's economic (reindeer keeping, forestry, agriculture) and recreational activities take place. It was therefore very important to involve regions' users into the decision-making and planning process.

A new method to involve local communities was based on asking them to play a central role in the process, on the contrary to a more 'traditional' method in which they are asked to comment an

existing plan. A working group was created including all the concerned parties, such as the Ministry of the Environment, land-owners, farmers, reindeer keepers, business organisations dealing with tourism and others.
As such, the planning process benefited from local knowledge and interests. The local communities had a genuine influence on the final protection regulations.

Marcin Konieczny, Foundation in support of Local Democracy Training Center in Olsztyn (Poland)

In 1999, a Convention of Businessmen (Chamber of Commerce) was established with the role of advising the City Council as far as entrepreneurs and investments policies were concerned. The Mayor and the City Council did not want to cooperate with this association, considered as a group of people who wanted to win coming local elections.

The Nidzica Development Fund (created in 1996 and composed of representatives from NGOs, citizens, Municipality civil servants) had been asked for mediation. The following steps were taken to solve the conflict:
- Formal and informal meetings with both parties' representatives for the presentation of the media-tion process
- Common training on conflict resolution techniques
- Common training on participatory planning process
- Common study visit in Denmark to see concrete examples of public-private cooperation
- Facilitated working meetings on policy scope and conditions
- Presentation of working meetings to the City Council and articles in local newspapers
- Presentation to the City Council of a report on Nidzica entrepreneurs' conditions
- Final agreement between the Convention of Businessmen and the City Council describing both parties' duties in the development of community investments and in the public works policy

> *'The Convention and other business representatives' organisations will be asked to participate in planning of community budget for the coming year'*
> *Final Agreement between private and public sectors,*
> *Nidzica - Poland*

Basic settlements of the Agreement:
"A representative of the Convention and other business rep-resentatives' organisations have a permanent place as en external expert and advisor in City Council working groups of budget, finance & taxes and enterprise"

"All City Council's decisions connected with taxes and other conditions of enterprise in the Municipality are consulted with the Convention before issued to public"

"In the tendering procedures (if not forbidden by the Public Tender Law) the preference to local companies has to be given"

A tripartite cooperation was formed among enterprises, NGOs and local government representatives. The Nidzica Development Foundation NIDA were the mediators in the process, whereas FSLP Olsztyn functioned as a source of professional help in terms of training and consultancy. The City Council and Entrepreneurs Association participated in the activities which consisted of trainings and workshops. In addition, NIDA prepared a report on the condition of the business sector in the city of Nidzica.

The main result of this tripartite cooperation is that a person representing the Nidzica Entrepre-uneurs Association will be an advisor in the City Council Commission of Economic Investment. In addition, the Nidzica Community Foundation created a Scholarship Programme with a budget of more than 50,000 Euro.

Thus, the tripartite cooperation is a good tool for civil society involvement in the decision-making process.

Lo Bianco Luca, Director of the Department of Economic and Politics Municipality of Rome

Mr Luca pointed out the tendency of the executive body to not include the citizens in the decision-making. He described the Roman experience and underlined two elements:
- transparency
- procedures that allowed this transparency

He explained that it is difficult to manage the decentralized process because there are many districts in Rome. The most important thing is to open a broad decentralization based on three principles:
- sustainability
- a specific and concrete impact
- participation

The process in Rome could have been characterised by:
- administration: how to reach a consensus
- participation: how to build a consensus

The second option was chosen. One year was needed to define the guidelines for the manual: difficulties were encountered in the territory analysis and the work that has to be done in order to guarantee a real participation of the citizens. Mr Luca expressed his satisfaction of the work already implemented so far.

Ezio Beltrame, Member of the Government of Region Friuli-Venezia-Giula (Italy)

Mr Beltrame first explained that the Friuli-Venezia-Giula Region is autonomous since 1964.

One of the big motivations for the cooperation of his region with South East Europe is its closeness with the Balkans. He expressed the concern of the Region about the fact that the Balkans are still not members of the European Union.
The collaboration with the EU institutions in the democratic transition is important.

He described the work of the Local Democracy Agencies as a prototype of what should be the process of democratisation: reciprocity, subsidiarity, involvement of all the partners are key words in LDAs' activities. He finally expressed his wish that the ALDA exports its methodology to the Middle East. According to him, the work of the LDAs is also relevant for this part of the world.

Jean-Daniel Biéler, Director of the First Table of the Stability Pact

Mr Biéler explained that the Council of Europe and the Stability Pact would organise a South-East European regional ministerial conference on « Effective Democratic Governance at Local and Regional Level » in Zagreb at the end of October 2004.
He stressed that the LDAs are the principal partners and channels of information for the preparation of that event.
He explained that the Conference of Barcelona is the opportunity for strengthening the participation of citizens in the decision-making process and also to share ideas on the modalities of that participation.

Selvedina Ulyic, Mayor of Zavidovici (Bosnia-Herzegovina)

Ms Ulyic explained the measures taken for decreasing the number of City Council members in order to be more efficient. Some other initiatives were implemented such as direct elections of the Mayor, vote procedures, whose aim was to guarantee a more transparent way of working.

"The control of the City Council work had been enhanced by the civil society via public debates, organisation of public sessions of the Municipal Council"

Selvedina Ulyic

She noted that these different measures foster the participation of the community in the local decision-making process and enhance the civil society's control of the City Council's work through public debates and the organisation of public sessions of the Municipal Council. A commission reports each six months in how far the rules of the Council are respected and if there is a rule is not followed, an ombudsman can be asked to propose recommendations that are made public. She finally explained that three months ago the statutes have been changed in order to respect all the rules in order to avoid a longer decision-making process.

Jean-Louis Testud, Deputy Mayor of Suresnes (France)

Mr Testud presented briefly the functioning of the City Council of Suresnes and explained the different means for fostering citizens' participation at local democracy level (www.ville-suresnes.fr):
- consultative councils in each City area;
- each Monday, the citizens can directly call the Mayor;
- youth council;
- newsletter;
- internet;
- one officer is in charge of the relations with the associations.

Mr Testud presented a concrete case study: the creation of a pedestrian area in the city centre. First, the Deputy Mayor of Suresnes stressed the fact that the citizens themselves raised this issue, that is the reason why the City Council decided to put it on the political agenda and to create tools that will involve as much as possible citizens in the setting up of the project (issues to be defined: boundaries of the pedestrian zone, parking sites, road traffic, public facilities, …).

The City of Suresnes organised a consultation with the neighbourhood consultative committees, the Association of traders and craftsmen in order to define the relevant issues and problems dealing with the creation of a pedestrian zone. In addition, working groups had been created with different stakeholders and representatives from civil society and from the City Council. Each working group dealt with a specific issue: security & safety; road traffic; housing, facilities & quality of life; trade. What is more, an inquiry had been undertaken among pedestrians in the city centre.

Further, several research departments were asked to technically assess the situation, the needs and the feasibility of the proposals and of the different scenarios.

A few months after the beginning of this process, a synthesis of the work done by each research department, as well as the different scenarios, had been presented to the working groups, to the neighbourhood consultative councils and to the Association of traders and craftsmen.

Finally, Mr Testud pointed out that other tools were also used in order to involve as much as possible the community:
- Internet: all the deliberations were published on the Internet, where visitors had the opportunity to react and share their opinions;
- Suresnes Magazine: a monthly newsletter in which a progress report of the project was described;
- A leaflet widely distributed and presenting the final scenario.

Annalisa Tomasi, "Association Project Prijedor" (Italy)

Ms Tomasi explained how the refugees' return after the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina was organised and how relations between the different ethnic groups were rebuilt in Prijedor.
The project «Prijedor - town of coexistence and reconciliation» included different activities: debates, round tables, workshops with children from primary and secondary schools and their parents of all categories (returnees, refugees, potential returnees).

Three working groups had been created (English, Italian and French-speaking working groups), all chaired by a Delegate of the Local Democracy Agencies. The aim of these working groups was to discuss the results of the inquiry and the case studies presented in it, and to debate citizens' participation as a common shared European value for local authorities and civil society organisations. Different kinds of stakeholders took part in these fruitful sessions: representatives from local authorities and civil society organisations from Western and Eastern Europe.

"It often happens that the participatory process opens a door, but it may not open the door to everybody. This inclusiveness is quite a challenge" Working groups' report

Presentation of the English-speaking working group: Tanja Puskaric, LDA Sisak Delegate (Croatia)
25 participants

Tatjana Puskaric opened the discussion by asking what the difference between participation and cooperation was. A participant from England pointed out that local authorities have a different perception of this concept than NGOs: genuine participation requires both sides to listen to each other, it is a two-way-communication. Who is taking part in the decision-making process?
Is it a cooperative process, in which decisions are taken together by different stakeholders (those who can be affected by the decision)? Sharing a decision is an important aspect. It often happens that the participatory process opens a door, but it may not open the door to everybody. This inclusiveness is quite a challenge. The idea of including all citizens who are affected by a decision in the decision-making process is one of the main principles that the Local Democracy Agencies are pursuing in their work. They are transmitters to give citizens a voice in public debates.

The example of the Nis City Council (Serbia-Montenegro)
The City Councillor of Nis presented how they involved different groups of citizens in the decision-making process, among them

> *'One of the main means to include more citizens was to open all local government sessions to the media. In addition, various debates with different experts were organised in order to improve the decision-making process.'*
>
> *Example of the Nis City Council Working groups' reports*

even Sinti and Roma. One of the main means to include more citizens was to open all local government sessions to the media. In addition, various debates with different experts were organised in order to improve the decision-making process. However, as the City Councillor from Nis explained, problems remained and citizens' participation is still low. According to him, there are three main reasons:
- motivation and interest
- communism
- lack of education

The audience agreed upon the fact that answers to this issue vary between Western and South-East Europe.

The problem of low participation

In some countries, the low participation in public debates and elections can be explained by a certain political culture, especially the communist culture that led to a more passive citizenship. Nonetheless, the problem also exists in countries that have had a democratic political tradition for a long time, for example England.

One participant mentioned different methods that his local authorities are using to improve citizens' participation such as public meetings, questionnaires and others. However, the feedback is still quite poor and this can probably be explained by the fact that people think their participation will make no difference.

New ways of participation

> *'The lack of education is the main obstacle for a full participatory process'*
>
> *Working groups' report*

Nowadays more and more citizens look for new ways of participation in their local communities that are not necessarily linked to their local authorities. For example, in Norway people are increasingly involved in supporting kindergartens and schools or other interest groups. For them, this has a direct impact on their lives. As far as community meetings are concerned, nothing will happen if they do not show up. Moreover, sometimes it is better to impose a provocative decision to have people to come to community meetings!
In some local authorities, however, there is still a lack of will to have the citizens participate in the decision-making process. The lack of education is the main obstacle for a full participatory process. The United States are a very good example how pupils from a very young age onwards are involved in different interests groups in their schools. Thus, training people to become active citizens is very important.

Principle of representation

The principle of representation is the most common one at the regional and local level. People are elected to represent their citizens. However, there is a tendency that citizens do not like their elected representatives. They would like to speak for themselves. How can we solve this? Maybe the new media could solve this problem.

> *"There is still a lack of mechanisms, a lack of will and a lack of education on participatory planning processes*
>
> *Working groups' report*

Women's participation

In many countries very few women take part in the decision-making process. This is due to a lack of childcare facilities and a lack of education (however, in some countries, girls now make up 60% of university students).
Factors for a successful decision-making process?
Some of the questions of the survey refer to this problem: for example question no. 6 ("What in your experience are the barriers to civil society's participation in the decision-making process at the local level") shows that a lack of certain and specific factors can lead to low participation.

There is still a lack of mechanisms, a lack of will and a lack of education for an efficient participatory planning process. We have to include those affected by a decision, i.e. share decision-making, open debates and set up public sessions.

Follow-up

The participants were all pleased with the questionnaire as an instrument to foster discussions. Nevertheless, they expressed their wish to continue the survey with more local authorities involved and to emphasise the differences between Eastern and Western Europe.

Presentation of the Italian-speaking working group: Patrizia Bugna, LDA Prijedor Delegate (Bosnia-Herzegovina)
22 participants

Emiliano Bertoldi, the Delegate of the LDA for Central and Southern Serbia, suggested some points of discussions:
1. New technologies in the participation of civil society: negative and positive aspects
2. How to promote participation and what kind of participation needs to be promoted?
3. The role of local authorities in the promotion of decentralized co-operation processes: which instruments?
4. What do we mean by "civil society"? Can we include informal groups in this concept?

Exchange of views on the mentioned topics:
1. New technologies in the participation of civil society: negative and positive aspects
-
2. How to promote participation and what kind of participation has to be promoted?
- We should give more input to the requests for participation. We should consider that people who participate are usually the ones who have already satisfied their basic needs (food, accommodation).

> *"Enlargement of the right to vote not only to immigrants, but to all the ones that live in the district: the town belongs not only to the registered people, but to the ones that "use" the town."*
>
> *Municipality of Mogliano Working groups' report*

- Participation in a complex society means finding a balance between different interests. We cannot put each interest group on the same level. Participation is important, but politics is as well. In our society, there are a lot of groups that cannot participate: the ones who do not vote, like for example children. Participation means also the capacity to look to the future, this is the reason why politics is so important.
- The best choices are not always the most 'participatory'. Sometimes it is more important that most of the people feel that they are involved in the choices.
- "I do not care" is a common phrase in Italy. We should inform the people about the positive aspects of participation. If people are better informed, they will participate more actively. If they realize that they can change the world and that their voice is useful to do it, they will participate. In this context, education plays a fundamental role.

3. The role of local authorities in the promotion of decentralized co-operation processes: which instruments?
Local authorities should promote participation and include more informal groups: we should use all kinds of participation that the Western society has known for more than 2000 years.

Municipality of Mogliano's experience (Italy)

the following instruments have been experimented:
- Enlargement of the right to vote not only to immigrants, but to all the ones that live in the district: the town belongs not only to the registered people, but to the ones that "use" the town
- Youth councils
- Committee of immigrants
- Association of districts
- Instruments of customer satisfaction to ask for comments and suggestions about the municipal services
- Seminars on participation. Before the elections, seminars on participation have been very interesting: some citizens' suggestions to change municipality regulations have been taken into consideration.

An instrument used in England is the questionnaire to assess citizens' opinions. The questionnaires have been spread in supermarkets, because the experience has shown that they are the best place to contact citizens.

Experience in Bosnia. In high schools, students made an experiment on how to solve a particular problem of the community. The results have been communicated to the local municipality.

4. What do we mean by "civil society"? Can we include informal groups in this concept?
- 'Civil society' is composed by formal and informal organisations, it is a non-institutional part of the society. Informal groups should also be included. It is important to think about what kind of rules should be applied to informal groups' participation.

- What is citizens' participation? It is a process with different experiences. It is important to build a relationship of trust between local authorities and citizens, to raise citizens' and local authorities' awareness with trainings and to use new technologies as a tool for improving information and participation.
- The participation of organized citizens and of the ones who are not organized is different.
- Importance of the concept of "participatory society", of "elective democracy": democracy of organized people. The setting up of budget including a participatory process is an example of trust in citizens.

> *'It is important to build a relationship of trust between local authorities and citizens, to raise citizens' and local authorities' awareness with trainings and to use new technologies as a tool for improving information and participation'*
>
> *Working groups' report*

Participative democracy asks the problem of legitimacy, because in democratic countries, elected representatives are chosen by civil society. One could have the impression that associations aim at using this power. Each one should know its place, one cannot take the place of elected people. Neighbourhood councils of Strasbourg (France) were working very well until the time where associations' representatives questioned the selection of elected people. More and more, these forums are politicised and have become a place for the opposition to express itself. Therefore, there is a risk of distorting the role of elected representatives who shall keep the power.
In Kosovo, people issued from associations have acquired, sometimes, more skills than elected people, which can foster tensions. Also, there is a budget problem: NGOs have much bigger budgets than local authorities. So, a raising awareness work needs to be done towards donors and local NGOs as far as their relations with local authorities are concerned.

To conclude, the participation of civil society in the decision-making process is rather a challenge than a shared value.

Presentation of the French-speaking working group: Stève Duchene, LDA Kosovo Delegate
7 participants

1. Citizens' participation: is it really a European value?
- Definition: proximity and participative democracy. There is a subtle difference between them.
- Legitimacy: participative and representative democracy. Definition of the role of elected members, of civil society and participants' legitimacy depending on the selection method.

Conclusion: is it a value or a challenge?
3. How is citizens' participation perceived in the different parts of Europe and especially in South East Europe?
- A project considered as viable in a particular area will not necessarily be so in other areas
- Citizens' participation spaces can be manipulated
- Several kinds of participation: different origins and operating methods

Conclusion: despite differing origins and operating methods, the aim is to favour more connections between citizens and elected members around political decisions

4. Discussions
Twinning in the 50s was seen as a tool in order to foster citizens' participation, more than 3'000 tow twinnings were set up in the entire Europe at the time.
How can twinnings be relaunched today? Currently, these are more considered, in some countries, as an opportunity for travelling, but it is also a tool for exchanging best practices, a tool that may foster citizens' participation.

Places where civil society can express itself are:
- either places of communication
- or places of influence

> *"To conclude, the participation of civil society into the decision-making process is rather a challenge than a shared value."*
>
> *Working groups' report*

Mr MacLean-Abaroa was elected four times Mayor of La Paz (administrative capital of Bolivia) since 1985. That makes him the longest democratically tenured Mayor in Bolivia's history. He also served both as Minister of Planning and Foreign Minister of Bolivia and has managed successful private companies and heads his own consulting firm. A founding member of the anti-corruption NGO Transparancy International, he also served as its first President for Latin America.
Currently Mr. MacLean-Abaroa is Programme Leader in the Governance Group at the World Bank Institute, but he also recently served as the Senior Governance Researcher of the Central America Project with the Harvard Institute for International Development, conducting research on institutional reform and governance and working on issues of decentralisation, devolution of government powers to local citizens and anti-corruption strategies.

Mr MacLean-Abaroa began his presentation by giving the audience some theoretical insights of what 'corruption' is. He explained that it is a universal problem that has been with us since the beginning of human organisation, but around the world local governments seem particularly susceptible. Municipalities are often accused not only of mismanagement but of pouring public funds into private pockets. Examples comprise bribes lead to the misallocation of subsidized housing; public property is used by city officials for private ends; permits and licences are facilitated by speed money, and sometimes purchased by a bribe; city services may not be available without an illegal side payment and so forth.

There are many definitions of corruption. Most broadly, it means the misuse of office for personal gain, an office being a position of trust in which someone is acting on behalf of a public or a private institution. Systematic corruption generates economic costs by distorting incentives, political costs by determining institutions, and social costs by redistributing wealth and power toward the undeserving. When corruption undermines property rights, the rule of law, and incentives to invest, economic, social and political development are crippled. Corruption exists in all countries, but it tends to be damaging in poor countries.

Preventing corruption therefore helps to raise city revenues, improve service delivery, stimulate public confidence and participation and win elections. This is an experience Mr. MacLean-Abaroa gained as Mayor of La Paz in 1985, being the first elected Mayor in 40 years. At that time, hyperinflation was crippling the country. Corruption was everywhere in La Paz. The average monthly salary for municipal staff was 30 USD and he himself only earned 45USD per month. Everyone was looking for a way to survive, a second income. Municipal workers were selling machinery parts owned by the municipality: caterpillars' pieces, trucks' tyres could be found on the black market.

The degree of institutional decay was such that authority had virtually collapsed in the municipality. Everyone was looking to survive in terms of income generation, and therefore corruption was widespread. Tax collectors used techniques ranging from extortion to speed money to arrangements for lower taxes in exchange for a bribe. The city government was in effect a huge "construction company" that was not constructing much. Finally, there was the municipal police, a "soft police" that did not conduct criminal investigations or carry arms.

'Corruption is not due to a culture

but to a system'

Ronald MacLean-Abaroa

A radical change was needed, but what to do to improve the situation? As Mayor, Mr. MacLean-Abaroa had to bring radical changes in the way the City Council and the Municipal civil servants were working. He started by analysing the situation through workshops with senior officials, which also motivated them to devise their own strategies for reform. That corruption was not a culture but due to a political system was one of the first results of the "diagnostic activities".

Mr. MacLean-Abaroa used the city's financial crisis to fire a large number of unqualified employees and to redefine the city's mission as carrying out emergency repairs but not major projects. Efforts were made to increase professionalism of the city's staff through meritocratic recruiting and promotion. Thus, municipal employees were working in much better conditions and were involved in the process of fighting corruption, from the diagnosis of the situation to the development of a strategy.

So, what can one do to fight corruption?
- involve employees in the diagnosis of corruption and in the development of a strategy
- help your employees before attacking them through the increase of salaries, an improvement of their working conditions
- recover institutional memory (fired people took the files with them and thus their knowledge)
- start with the easiest task and then continue with the more difficult ones
- ally with favourable institutional forces
- ride the wave of reform
- involve the private sector
- introduce a merit system to increase professionalism of staff
- make administration easy through a cut in the number of taxes and regulations

The role of NGOs in this process is to convince local governments that it is in their interest to cooperate with you and to fight corruption. Coalition-building in this respect is very important.

Mr MacLean-Abaroa also explained the current tendency of corruption in the cities. Indeed, decentralisation, loose financial control from central administration and - especially in developing countries - a decrease of municipal wages might breed municipal corruption. However, this trend is going along with local democratisation and a reinforcement of municipal accountability.

Finally, he underlined the fact that the main problem while fighting corruption is that, in most of the countries, there is no lobby to combat it, as the corruption costs are widespread all over the population, as are the benefits of erasing corruption. There is no sustainable and institutionalised denial and lobbying power against corruption. As a result, he stressed the importance of the creation of Transparency International in 1993, an international NGO fighting corruption, of which he is a founding member.

The participation of citizens in the decision-making process is one of the great challenges of today's democracies. It is also a very complex issue: voter turn-out is on the decrease at the European level, but on the increase at the national level. The statistics for elections at the local level may be equally contradictory, but one should bear in mind that citizens' participation should not be confined to elections only. There are many methods of how citizens can participate in the decision-making process at the local level as the case studies presented here have shown.

Participation can be organised through Steering Committee meetings, open City Council debates, opinion polls among the population or the use of new technologies. A real challenge in this is the inclusion of immigrants, women, young people and other marginalised groups as is the decision-making process in multiethnic communities of post-war societies in general, as the examples from South East Europe have shown. Moreover, post-communist societies in Central and Eastern Europe still face the challenges of "re-educating" their citizens to actively participate in decision-making processes in national or local politics. Nevertheless, other European countries have also noticed a lack of interest in the citizens to be actively involved in local or national politics. This may be due to the fact that participation can also be realised through an involvement in interest groups and civil society organisations.

Nonetheless, where participation is denied or mismanaged it can lead to the citizens' mistrust in their politicians and finally to corruption. Therefore, it should be in the interest of all members of society to guarantee an open and inclusive decision-making process at the local or national level.

The question if there is a common European value in the decision-making process can be answered with an assertive "yes", but the way the citizens are included in this process vary extensively according to regional and cultural differences, as the debates in the working groups of the conference in Barcelona have demonstrated. With all these differences, one issue remains certain, however: the common aim to include citizens in the decision-making process at the local level. This as such can be considered a common European value.

The continuing education of citizens – be it children, young people or adults – as regards their democratic rights and responsibilities is therefore of considerable significance. The Local Democracy Agencies and other civil society organisations are undoubtedly a powerful tool to raise awareness among the citizens as well as among local authorities as to how to guarantee the inclusion of citizens in the decision-making process in the most effective way.