



ALDA
Association of Local
Democracy Agencies

supported by



First Assessment on Active Citizenship in South Eastern Europe

ALDA, your partner in SEE

Index

A first assessment on the programme Europe for Citizens in SEE

a) Intro	3
b) Activities for Active Citizenship	3
c) Lobbying	3
d) Complementary support for IPA Programmes	4
e) Countries one by one	4
f) Some elements for a first assessment	5
g) ALDA and the programmes to support European Active Citizenship in South Eastern Europe	7
1. Active Citizenship Modules	7
2. Youth in Action in SEE	7
3. Civil Society programmes	8
> TACEP (Training for Active Citizenship in the Enlargement Process)	8
> ICE (Istria communicating Europe)	9
> Donner envie d'Europe	10
4. Citizens panels	10
> ALL.4.EU: Citizens for Europe	10
> E-panels: fostering citizens' participation and volunteering in a wider Europe	12
5. Town twinning support measures	13
> Town-twinning: a vehicle for European integration	13
> CITIES: Creativity and Innovation in Town-twinning: Initiatives in Europe and South-Eastern Europe	14
6. Remembrance	15
> E-For: Education for Remembrance	15
Annexe 1	
ALDA Working group in Skopje, 3 rd December 2009	16
Annexe 2	
Conference on town-twinning and civil society Networking, Skopje, 4 th December 2009	17
1. Worskhop on civil society networking: David Lopez and Lulzim Haziri	17
2. Worskhop on town twinning: Marta Petrova and Camille Gangloff	17
Annexe 3	
Europe for Citizens grants for SEE	19

Contacts

President *Per Vinther*
 per.vinther@aldaintranet.org

Director *Antonella Valmorbida*
 antonella.valmorbida@aldaintranet.org

47, rue des Confédérés - 1040 Bruxelles, Belgium
tel. 0032 27420161 • mobile 0032 473 995 374

Council of Europe
Avenue de l'Europe - 67075 Strasbourg, France
tel. 0039 335 52 36 341

A first assessment on the programme Europe for Citizens in SEE



a) Intro

Since 2007, the programme *Europe for Citizens* was intended to be opened for non EU members States – but in the path of enlargement - that would have match the condition for being included in it. In this way, it was clearly expressed as an instrument to share and build together the European Identity with the future members States of the Union. To be accepted, the non members Countries must sign an agreement with the European Commission and pay an *entry ticket*. Today, the position of Western Balkans Countries in the programme differs quite a lot.

The Association of Local Democracy Agencies is present in the region since 1999¹ with 11 LDAs for the promotion of local democracy and citizens' participation. It includes the factual cooperation of European partners (mostly local authorities but also NGOs), which are supporting programmes and which are implementing a diplomacy from below, so important since the end of the conflict.



¹ While, the Local Democracy Agencies coordinated by a Steering Committee of the Congress of the Council of Europe have been on the spot since 1993 (see http://alda-europe.eu/alda/front_content.php?idcat=4)

b) Activities for Active Citizenship

Naturally, ALDA and the LDAs accompanied many initiatives of the partners and members active in Western Balkans to promote European Active Citizenship. In particular with:

- Local Democracy Agency in Sisak, Verteneglio and Osijek in **Croatia**;
- Local Democracy Agency in Skodra, **Albania**;
- The programme of Decentralised cooperation France/Balkans;
- The programme of Decentralised cooperation Basse Normandie/Macedonia, **Macedonia**.

c) Lobbying

Moreover, ALDA embarked on a relevant lobbying activity when in 2008 Macedonia was not yet included in the programme “Europe for Citizens” (with contact with Ministries and an NGO campaign supporting the inclusion of the country in the programme). As for Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, a common lobbying initiative from ALDA and NALAS (the Network of the National Association of Local Authorities of SEE) have approached the relevant Ministries.

ALDA participated in the Forum of NGOs promoted during the Exit Festival in Novi Sad in July 2009, promoting a debate with local authorities and civil society on how to include Serbia in the Europe for Citizens programme.

In March 2009, ALDA was co organizer of an event on the possibilities of twinning initiatives in the region with the CEMR, in Sarajevo².

² http://alda-europe.eu/alda/front_content.php?idcat=2&idart=463

d) Complementary support for IPA Programmes

In most of the countries, the programme Europe for Citizens is a complementary action of a larger programme (in terms of funding) related to the IPA initiatives, where local governance and development of civil society is among the priorities. Indeed, in the countries where the EFC is not eligible, the European support is present through specific initiatives funding by the pre accession instruments or with others funds (like Stability Instruments³, EDHIR, etc).

e) Countries one by one



Croatia

Croatian partners are eligible for the programme EFC since November 2007. A growing number of projects are implemented.

Numbers of projects for the promotion of the programme EFC have been realized and above all NGOs applied. There were mainly preparatory programmes to build competencies for future application.

In 2008:

- Croatian cities have been partners in 4 projects of town twinning/meeting of citizens;
- 1 citizens panel;
- 1 supporting measures programme;
- 3 civil society programmes;
- 1 project for remembrance.

In 2009:

- 1 twinning programme/meeting of citizens presented by a Croatian town;
- 1 thematic network;
- 6 projects of civil society;
- 2 projects for remembrance.

In particular, the region Istria is particularly active in the programme (Istria Communicating Europe, ALL 4 Eu).

Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
Macedonia is eligible since March 2009.

Civil Society played an important role of lobbying. The support of ALDA was essential in this: information days in January 2009 with 50 participants and lot of interest raised. The NGOs in Macedonia are very proactive and interested in the programme.

So far, few have been the opportunities for applying with few responses. Most of the opportunities have been offered by ALDA:

- a partner from MK has been accepted in a programme of Remembrance;
- a training in Skodra on twinning initiative where municipalities from Macedonia participated and expressed needs and wish for the future activities;
- a training conference on twinning initiatives in Skopje in December 2009;
- a working group of ALDA on Active Citizenship in December 2009.

Albania

Albania is eligible since April 2009.

Few have applied so far and it seems that most of the interest in local governance are directed to the IPA funds today.

Others

For the time being, **Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo** and **Bosnia Herzegovina** did not show their interest to be part in the programme to the European Commission. Nevertheless, there is a great interest coming from the NGO sector. Numbers of twinning initiatives are currently promoted and on going.



³ See ALDA projects: http://alda-europe.eu/alda/front_content.php?idcat=235, Reconciling for the future

f) Some elements for a first assessment

The issue of citizens' participation in the strengthening and enlargement of the European Union is a cross cutting and fundamental one. Europe can not be done without its citizens and bypassing a direct contact with them.

Western Balkans have gone through a war in these last years and many key issues are still pending for stability in the region.

However, the European perspective seems to be a goal to achieve towards peace and development in order to overcome difficulties and differences. However, far from every citizens is convinced of the necessity of joining EU and therefore a consultation and giving information to citizens seem essential for a clear choice, made with all the possible awareness its of implications.

After two years of implementation, the situation between Croatia, Macedonia and Albania differs quite a lot:

- **Croatia:** civil society well structured, professional, more and more used to EU programmes. In general, CSO and LA have a good capacity to apply and manage EU funds (even if still progress to do). Good support from the government (national point established).
- **Macedonia:** civil society needs to be more specialised and structured, big difference between Skopje/the rest of the country. But very high dynamism, willingness to be trained and to improve the functioning.



Las and CSOs are very interested in international cooperation. But lack of support of the government.

- **Albania:** civil society very weak, LAs also. Lack of information about the programme, no support from the government. Lack of interest for this programme (with low fundings compared to IPA).

Difficulties:

- some SEE countries can apply, other cannot: this is a problem knowing the importance of regional cooperation and the need of avoiding exclusion;
- many municipalities in the EU are twinning with cities in **Serbia** or **Montenegro** and cannot use the programme;
- lack of training/information especially in **Albania**, also in **Macedonia** (it depends according to the regions) while very good knowledge in **Croatia**;
- visas issue: difficult to feel a European citizens without free movement (will change



for **Macedonia**, not for **Albania**/will change for **Serbia** but still not eligible);

- financial capacity of NGOs: needs for NGOs in **Macedonia** and **Albania** to specialise and network/For LAs, need to secure the budget at the city Council;
- need for governments in **Macedonia** and **Albania** to play an active role in the promotion of the programme: establish national contact points, translate documents, organise trainings etc.;
- need to promote exchanges of best practices (in particular between countries with similar experiences: ex **Macedonia** and **Bulgaria**);
- in general, in all the countries, there is a need to support networking and cooperation not only between LAs and CSOs from these countries and EU countries, but also between LAs and CSOs.

It is also very important to mention the positive things:

- this programme enables NGOs and LAs in SEE to be part of European exchanges, to develop their sense of European identity, they can feel closer to the EU;
- thanks to the trainings organised within EFC projects, NGOs and LAs in SEE can strengthen/ improve their capacities, and learn from the experience of the others (often, they are first partners of projects; then, they can be lead partners);
- it enable LAs and CSOs from the EU to better know this region (and prepare the enlargement).



g) ALDA and the programmes to support European Active Citizenship in South Eastern Europe

Programmes implemented so far (as direct implementing unit or as a supporting partner)



1. Active Citizenship Modules



Education and Culture DG

'Europe for Citizens' Programme

ALDA promotes the field testing and implementing of a module on Active Citizenship engaging local authorities and civil society to address problem solving together.

The module has been developed in 2008 and 2009 throughout Europe and is now bringing its first results¹.

A training kit and has been prepared and translated in several languages and a pool of experts in different languages is now available.

In South Eastern Europe, with its own resources, ALDA approached many partners before the programme Europe for Citizens was actually available.

The partners in SEE 2008 were:

- National Forum API, Bulgaria;
- LDA Osijek, Croatia;
- CRPRC Studiorum, Macedonia;
- NGO Horizont, Albania.

The partner in SEE in 2009 is:

- CRPRC Studiorum, Macedonia.

¹ http://alda-europe.eu/alda/front_content.php?idcat=186

2. Youth in Action in SEE



Education and Culture DG

'Youth in Action' Programme



Since 2007, ALDA is implementing a wide range of activities in the programme Youth in Action called **Youth the Right Direction** involving all the Local Democracy Agencies and supporting empowerment of Youth and citizens' engagement.

The main programme is Youth the Right Direction and it create 10 Youth inform points and network in the region.

All the LDAs are accredited to receive EVS and applied capacity building for youth groups.





3. Civil Society programmes

> TACEP (Training for Active Citizenship in the Enlargement Process) (3 LDAs in Croatia involved, 2008/2009)

The project focused on the need to provide capacity building to Croatian civil society organizations in order to support and promote their role as multipliers and links with the citizens in the context of the EU Enlargement Process, taking into consideration the candidate status of Croatia.

The **objectives of the project** were the following:

- to train Croatian citizens and civil society organizations in the field of active citizenship, by considering the status of pre-accessing country of Croatia;
- to provide capacity building to civil society organization to act as “multipliers” at the local level in the field of active citizenship;



- to promote cooperation and to favour the development of partnerships both at the European and at the local level and in the field of active citizenship;
- to set-up three information points on active citizenship by the LDAs;
- to realize a useful handbook about “Enlargement and Active citizenship”.

The project was implemented in the 3 Croatian LDAs (Verteneglio, Sisak, Osijek). It lasted from September 2008 to June 2009 and consisted of the following activities:

- preparation meeting;
- 3 trainings of multipliers (2 trainings, of 4 and 3 days); the trainings took place:
 - in Osijek, on the 5-8th March 2009 and 20-22nd March 2009, in partnership with UPS, AIESEC Osijek, NANSEN Dialogue Centre, ROTARACT Osijek, PRONI Osijek and Hungarian partners from Pecz, gathering 25 participants, including 5 Hungarian participants;
 - in Sisak, on the 26-29th March 2009 and 17-19th April 2009, in partnership with IKS Association, Petrinja Civil Right Project, Sisak, Going to Europe of Modena (Italy), gathering 19 participants, including 5 Italian participants;
 - in Verteneglio, on the 2-5th April 2009 and 8-10th May 2009, in partnership with the Municipalities of Verteneglio and Cittanova, the City Library in Cittanova and the youth NGO Informo, gathering 21 participants, including 5 Italian participants.



- 3 Europe for Citizens Information Points open on the 9th May (Day of Europe); as a follow-up of the training, on the 9th May 2009, 3 Info Point “Europe for Citizens” were open in the 3 LDAs on the 9th May 2009, celebrating the Day of Europe:
 - in Verteneglio and Osijek, about 30 people came to visit the LDA as Info Point;
 - LDA Sisak organized activities in 3 municipalities: Sisak, Petrinja and Gvozd, in partnership with 5 other local NGOs; in Sisak, more than 200 people visited the stand on EU and Europe for citizens programme;

- publication and CD-ROM.

Evaluation

Targets: Ordinary citizens and representatives of different civil society organizations, both local and international, represent the main target of the trainings. Civil servants and elected public officials will also be given the opportunity to attend the trainings, in order to enhance the relation between local institutions and civil society.

Main results:

- increased knowledge on active citizenship and European citizenship;
- better knowledge/skills about the programme Europe for citizens;
- improved skills on joint planning and learning;
- networking at the local level and at the European level (transnationality);

- multipliers trained in 3 Croatian regions;
- opening of 3 info points: sustainable basis for future cooperation.

Partners:

ALDA, LDA Osijek, LDA Sisak, and LDA Verteneglio (Croatia).



> ICE (Istria communicating Europe) (Region of Istria covered, 2008/2009)



The project had as overall objective to broaden the knowledge and un-

derstanding of the European Union and the process of European integration in general among Croatian citizens through the various sources of information on the EU and the opportunities offered to Croatian citizens through its programmes during the pre-adhesion period.

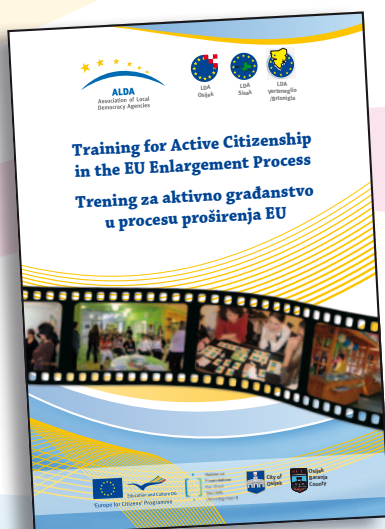
This enabled the partners to make steps towards conducting the communication strategy aimed at informing the Croatian public about the European integration process of Croatia in the Region of Istria, the benefits and costs of integration.

Activities:

- kick-off meeting in Pula, November 2008;
- opinion poll;
- workshops in high schools, January-March 2009;
- study visit in Veneto, June 2009;
- final conference in Pula, June 2009;
- communication tools: webpage, TV spots, Radio show and spots, final publication.

Main results:

- knowledge of the citizens about the EU improved;
- interest of citizens about EU policies increased;





- awareness of citizens about the results of EU projects in their territory increased;
- better knowledge about available programmes for Croatian citizens.

Partners

The partnership includes the most relevant stakeholders of the civil society in the Istrian region (Region of Istria, Foundation for Partnership and civil society development, NGO Suncokret, NGO Informo, NGO Zum) and a transnational partner (ALDA).

> Donner envie d'Europe (with REALPE, LDA Sisak as partner)

The **project** aims at valorizing the democratic process in different countries to promote a stronger active citizenship based on the participation of local authorities and citizens.

Partners:

European feminist initiative, cultural association Jacquemott, LDA Sisak, Ville d'Aubagne and Magdebourg, Stockholm and Athos Athansios.



4. Citizens panels

> ALL.4.EU: Citizens for Europe (Region of Istria as lead partner, 2008)

The **project** aimed at:

- further developing and consolidating - on the basis of the pilot project implemented by ALDA in 2006 and 2007 - the "tool" and the methodology of the citizens panels, adding some steps (i.e. the initial training) which may grant a stronger impact and better results;
- widening the number of partners and the number of countries where to establish "citizens' panels" in order to create the basis for a relevant and significant European platform of citizens panels;
- developing a thematic approach focused to generate discussion and deliver citizens reflection on citizens participation and active European citizenship, also in the light of the forthcoming European elections in 2009, which represent a culmination of an important EU-wide process of representative democracy, taking into consideration the new institutional developments at the European level and the difficulties the EU is facing nowadays in the relation with its citizens.



The **main overall objectives** of the project were:

- to encourage the participation of European citizens in the construction of Europe and in the debate about the further integration of Europe;
- to enhance the relation between European citizens and EU institutions;
- to promote a "two-way process" (information and feedback) between EU Institutions and citizens;
- to encourage a bottom up approach to allow citizens to express their views;
- to develop innovative methods to enhance participation.



The **specific objectives** of the project were:

- to create and support “citizens’ panels” to promote active European Citizenship at the local level;
- to collect the opinion of citizens on some key European challenges for the future, focusing mainly on active European Citizenship;
- to consolidate and improve, starting from the pilot project developed by ALDA, a method for stimulating active interaction and discussion between citizens on their participation at the European level;
- to create mechanisms that enable European citizens to develop civic competences, to formulate their views and opinions on the role of citizens and civil society in Europe in the form of recommendations for policy makers at European level;
- to encourage the dialogue between European citizens and the EU institutions, empowering citizens as regards EU policies and their impact, and ensuring appropriate follow up of citizens’ opinions by the EU institutions.



Activities:

- SWOT analysis at the local level (on the situation of citizens’ participation);
- training of citizens panels activators in Strasbourg, April 2009 (20 participants);
- international workshop: best practices in citizens’ participation, in Strasbourg, April 2009;
- set-up of local citizens’ panels: 1 day event in May/June 2009;
- research activity at the local level (by citizens’ panels on the topic);
- international meeting of citizens panels in Sofia, July 2009 (40 participations);
- 3 Info-days at the local level, in September-October 2009;
- final conference in Pula, November 2009
- publication and website

Main results:

- citizens’ panels set-up in 5 countries + network of citizens’ panels;
- information about the EU and new institutional developments increased;
- multipliers trained;
- common recommendations drafted by citizens’ panels.

Partners

ALDA, Region Istria (Croatia), Foundation for partnership and civil society development (Croatia) Balkan Assist Association (Bulgaria), Municipality of Vejle (Denmark), Consvipo (Italy), Local Councils Association Malta, Centrum komunitneho organizovania (Slovakia), SEE-CN (Slovakia).



> **E-panels: fostering citizens' participation and volunteering in a wider Europe (partners from Croatia, Albania, Macedonia, 2009/2010)**



Creativity
and Innovation
European Year 2009

The project is designed to address the issue of bridging the gap between citizens and the European Union in an innovative way. Bringing the EU closer to the citizens is one of the biggest challenges the EU is facing today. The need to promote and explain the "European project" to citizens, but also to involve them in its definition itself, is well understood by the partners of this proposal.

The **project** will aim at:

- consolidating the methodology of "citizens' panels", adding a new dimension, i.e. the e-dimension, in line with the European Year of Creativity and Innovation 2009;
- widening the number of participants in panels involved through the use of ICT and online forum;
- generating discussion on a specific theme, i.e. citizen participation in Europe and what role volunteering can play in this regard;
- including candidate countries (and potential one) in this process, in order to foster citizen participation about EU issues in the wider Europe, developing thus an inclusive mechanism.



The project will consist in the creation of "e-panels" including citizens from different ages, nationalities and backgrounds. Throughout the project, various local, transnational and international and online activities will be organized.

Activities:

- launching conference in Skopje;
- training for citizens' panels activators in Brussels;
- set-up of online platform;
- information day on e-panels (day of Europe);
- local online workshops;
- final conference in Zagreb;
- publication.

Partners

ALDA, Maison de l'Europe Caen (France), Fundacion Insula Barataria (Spain), Association for European Partnership (Bulgaria), LDA Osijek and LDA Sisak (Croatia), Studiorum (Macedonia), NGO Horizont (Albania).



5. Town twinning support measures

> **Town-twinning: a vehicle for European integration (activities in Albania and Macedonia, focus on SEE, 2008/2009)**



The **project** aimed at promoting town-twinning, focusing in particular on the multilateral decentralized cooperation approach, as a vehicle to foster European Integra-

tion and to promote, develop and strengthen twinning agreements relations amongst local authorities in the enlarged Europe.

The **specific objectives** were:

- promoting the concept of town twinning;
- starting, revitalising, and developing town twinning relationships;
- improving the quality of the activities within existing twinning relationships, especially by means of developing thematic cooperation;
- developing new skills amongst those who are responsible for twinning activities at a local level.

The project sought to reach a large number of municipalities (around 40-50 institutions directly involved in the events) and had therefore an important multiplier effect.

Activities:

- training for local authorities on town-twinning, Shkodra, June 2009 (15 participants);
- online-advisory service;
- international workshop in Skopje, December 2009 (72 participants);
- final publication and website.

The variety of forms of the activities proposed sought to provide municipalities a “full” support, providing them:

- new information and knowledge on the



concept of town twinning, through all the activities foreseen;

- capacity building, through the training addressed to those responsible for twinning activities;
- consultancy, through the training and the On-line Advisory Service;
- tools facilitating partner search and networking, especially through the international workshop;
- the opportunity to exchange best practices and experiences, through the training, the international workshop and especially the final publication.

The target group was represented by regional, national and international Associations of Local Authorities, Local Authorities (mainly municipalities) and other bodies/organizations promoting town twinning.

The project was addressed to local authorities based in programme countries and will also involve – with no impact on the EU budget of the





project - local authorities from countries which can potentially take part in the Programme in the future (e.g. Bosnia Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo, etc.).

Partners

ALDA, Central Stara Planina (Bulgaria), with the support/involvement of: CEMR, LDAs, ALDA members.

> **CITIES: Creativity and Innovation in Town-twinning: Initiatives in Europe and South-Eastern Europe (2009/2010)**

A large number of municipalities across Europe are involved and participate in town twinning activities. As a pan-European movement, town twinning has however an important and yet unused local development potential. At the same time certain methodological and content needs, related to town twinning, have been identified which could be met through the development of a range of support measures.

Many town twinning projects traditionally address issues that are close to citizens within a local context. This enables people from different European Countries to share experience and to learn from each other. On the other hand town twinning is also a vehicle for European integration: it is a way to bring forward the European integration related issues high on the local policy/decision making agenda.

The challenge is to combine these two traditions and it is to this end that the Europe for Citizens programme identifies thematic priorities. Sup-

port measures should therefore provide pre-conditions for a more effective consultations among the twinned towns as to how to handle the priority themes such as active European Citizenship, or inter-cultural dialogue, and to incorporate them in their own local framework.

The present proposal focuses on the European Year of Creativity and Innovation 2009 and how to implement and translate it into local practice in the framework of town-twinning exchange and cooperation.

The project aims at promoting “innovation and creativity” in the framework of town-twinning, both in Europe and with a special focus on South-eastern Europe, as a way to revitalise and develop town-twinning relationships and thus strengthen cooperation among “old”, new and forthcoming Member States.

More specifically, the **project** will aim at:

- promoting the concept of town twinning;
- starting, revitalising, and developing town twinning relationships;
- improving the quality of the activities within existing twinning relationships, especially by means of developing thematic co-operation;
- developing new skills amongst those who are responsible for twinning activities at a local level;
- promoting exchange of good practices in the field of town-twinning.

The proposal seeks to reach a large number of municipalities, especially through their associations or federations, and will therefore have an important multiplier effect.



Activities:

- 7 national conferences in **Albania, Bulgaria, Lithuania, Macedonia, Slovakia**;
- international twinning conference in the **Netherlands**;
- innovative town-twinning cooperation tool.

Partners

ALDA, Albanian Association of Municipalities, RAM Central Stara Planina (Bulgaria), Union of Black Sea Local Authorities, Association of Local Authorities in Lithuania, ECOVAST (Macedonia), International Cooperation Agency of the Association of Netherlands Municipalities, The Union of Towns and Cities of Slovakia.

6. Remembrance

> E-For: Education for Remembrance (2009/2010)

This project is based on a multi-faceted approach to education for remembrance, with a double aim: to embed it in education to human rights and active European citizenship and to maintain and increase its relevance for a future when no survivors of events happened during the Second World War will be left.

Under such circumstances it is also important to raise awareness on 'minor' memorial sites, to connect them to the wider picture of nazi-fascist mass murderings in Europe, in order to give to young people a strong, locally radicated notions of such events.

Specifically, **project's objectives** are the fol-



lowing:

- to gather practitioners in education and memorial sites conservation to produce a creative and innovative 'educational unit' for remembrance education, in the spirit and within the framework of the **European Year for creativity and innovation 2009**;
- to build capacity for partners to organize events at the local level;
- to build a network to share opportunities and resources for relevant stakeholders in education and memorial sites conservation;
- to generate a widespread debate across Europe on education for remembrance, human rights and solidarity;
- to raise awareness on 'minor' memorial sites and ensure they have the possibility to partner and apply for funding for projects connected to remembrance and historical memory education.

Activities:

- meeting in Jasenovac;
- local events;
- production of educational booklet and website.

Partners

ALDA, Jasenovac Memorial Site and LDA Sisk (Croatia), Memorial de Caen-Normandie (France), Comune di Nardo (Italy), Institute for National History (Macedonia), The Junction: towards understanding and healing (Northern Ireland).

ALDA Working group in Skopje, 3rd December 2009

Topics discussed:

- citizens' participation in Macedonia/the Balkans;
- the programme Europe for Citizens.

Discussion

The programme Europe for citizens is a very convenient programme due to the different sizes of the grants (there are small ones, convenient for smaller NGOs, and bigger ones, convenient for bigger NGOs).

The problem for a Macedonian NGO is the **financial capacity** (the average budget of an NGO is 5000-10000 euros per year).

The programme raised enthusiasm, especially the town-twinning part. But here the problem is **the need to secure the budget in the city Council**.

For example, in Veles and Probistip, municipalities know and use the programme for town-twinning support. But in Probistip, NGOs do not have **information** on the programme.

In Bitola and Prilep, they also know the programme, and have adequate information. But the main problem is about the **budget** (lack of capacity to manage/ to absorb it). So a possible solution would be to **build coalition** of NGOs (even at the regional level).

Another problem of NGOs in Macedonia is the **lack of specialisation**. According to the topics, it is very difficult to identify partners.

The **cofunding** is also an issue. With lump sum and flat rate system, even if the cofunding is not requested (in a specific percentage), it is still needed. And it is very difficult to find it.

Partnership (international/ local) is also an issue. Indeed, those who have enough budget,

they already have European partnership. Partnership costs money! So if you do not have a budget/money, you do not have partnership. And of course, for those who already have partners, it is easier to approach the Europe for citizens programme.

Another point to be stressed is the existing **gap between Skopje-based NGOs and NGOs based in the other parts of Macedonia**.

The **responsibility of the governments** must also be stressed: they paid the entry ticket to the programme, so they have to spread the information about the programme. They should ensure that Macedonian local authorities and NGOs are able to apply! But this is not happening. The Ministry in charge of the programme does not even provide a phone number/ name of person in charge.

And an important point is **the lack of translated documents**: there are no official translations into Macedonian of the Europe for citizens documents (guide, website, etc). The existing one have been done for free by NGOs. And the **language barrier** is important. The jargon used in the Europe for citizens programme require translations to be sure to be understood.

Trainings and information sessions are still needed but what would be necessary is to design more **tailor-made sessions**.

It would be also necessary to have **national contact point** for the programme (as in other countries).



Conference on town-twinning and civil society Networking, Skopje, 4th December 2009

1. Worskhop on civil society networking: David Lopez and Lulzim Haziri

Preliminary remarks:

- a network is a tool, not an objective or an end in itself;
- civil society Networking has to be planned for the long run, it is not just a moment;
- in order to plan a network for the lon run, you needs resources (human, financial, technical resources);
- the issue of the NGO specialisation is also important: they have to tend to a more Professional functioning.

Problem

In Macedonia and Albania, there is a language issue to access to European programmes: they are not officially translated in the local languages. There is a lack of information in the local languages accessible to the local NGOs.



Recommendations:

- to continue to reflect on the concept of twinings (town/ NGO twinings, how to go beyond?);
- to create more links between existing European programmes (Youth in Action, Europe for Citizens, etc.);
- to support the structuration of civil society networks at the local and European levels;
- to support the specialisation/professionalisation of the NGO sector, through resources, to make their voices heard;
- for the Macedonian and Albanian authorities, to translate the documentation related to the European programmes into the local languages.

Conclusion

An important element is also to promote the cooperation between NGOs and local authorities. This cooperation is important to make sure that the civil society is both representative and represented.

This sustainable partnership between the local authorities and the civil society is for both beneficial. Local authorities can support NGOs in their activities and give them a voice while NGOs can share their experiences and expertise with local authorities and help them to evaluate the impact of their policies.

2. Worskhop on town twinning: Marta Petrova and Camille Gangloff

Remarks

Challenges connected to town-twinning:

- how to make town-twinning lively?
- how to financially support town-twinning activities?

Recommendations:

1. To make town-twinning lively/ successful:
 - Look at **best practices** from other municipalities (for example, the municipality of Gabrovo in Bulgaria): in general, what is important, is to have community-ba-

sed twinning activities. Town-twinning should not rely only on communication between municipalities, mayors and administrations. To have a sustainable town-twinning, it is important to involve the community as much as possible.

- To involve the community, first through cultural events and youth activities ; it is important to promote the real benefits of town-twinning for the community. For example, with events such as youth festival, international festival of humor, etc, you offer a platform of expression for youth and artists from the community and you open their perspectives.

2. To support financially town-twinning activities:

- Need to plan the activities in the municipal budget: this aspect of budget planning is very important to ensure that all the costs will be covered.
- Look at European fundings: for example, the Europe for citizens programme (presented during the workshop, see ppt attached) but also other programmes, such as Youth in Action.
- Exchange experiences with other municipalities on the use of European fundings: for example, in Bulgaria, they used the experience from municipalities located in countries that joined the EU before Bulgaria. In the Balkans, municipalities can for example rely on the experience of Bulgarian/Roumanian/Slovenian municipalities, Although it can be stressed that the first time, it may be difficult to apply, and that the process is not very quick, the conclusion is that the municipalities and their communities really benefited from the European funds: it is a real financial support for activities. And all the municipalities have capacities to apply to such funds (at least for the citizens meetings, within the Europe for citizens programme).
- Associations of municipalities and networks have an important role to play to support municipalities in the application process: they can give advice, share experiences, etc.



Conclusion

- In Macedonia, there are very active municipalities in the field of town-twinning. There is a real interest to strengthen existing town-twinning but also to develop new ones with municipalities in EU countries, in order to get closer to the EU and develop links with other citizens in Europe.
- There are important challenges in this field, in particular: how to involve the community and make the town twinning beneficial for everyone, as a community project, and also how to financially support the activities.
- In general, culture and youth events remain the core activities of town-twinning. But this can also change with more support.
- The usefulness of EU programmes has been stressed, although some difficulties have been highlighted in the application process (lack of information or document in local languages, lack of capacities, etc).
- Sharing best practices and experiences with other municipalities on successful town twinning and successful use of EU fundings has been highlighted as a very good mean to develop and promote town-twinning. The contribution of network and associations of municipalities is in this regard very important.
- Finally, the importance of strengthening the link between local authorities and civil society has also been stressed : NGOs can be a link between the local authorities and the communities. They can also share their experiences of international cooperation and EU projects.

Europe for Citizens grants for SEE

(collection taken from the public information on DGEAC website)

- > Albania
- > Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
- > Croatia

Action 1 Measure 1.1: "Town twinning citizens' meetings" 2008: LABIN

Action 1-Measure 2.1 - Call for proposals EA-CEA/07/2008 - Citizens' Projects: All for EU, Citizens for Europe, Region of Istria, Croatia

Action 1-Measure 2.2 Support Measures, 2008: Association of Municipalities of the Rep. of Croatia

Action 2-Measure 3: Support for projects initiated by civil society organizations, Selection 2008:

- Role of Youth in Peace- Building Process, Center for Peace Studies/Centar za mirovne studije (CPS/CMS), Zagreb
- Istria Communicating Europe, Foundation for Partnership and civil society development, Pula
- Ferry Boat- Split-Ancona inter-cultural dialogue through volunteering, Association "MI", Split



Action 4: Active European Remembrance - Selections 2008: Exploring the memories of Women Victims of Nazism and Undemocratic Regimes in Research and Teaching, Centre for Women's Studies

Action 1-Measure 1.2 Network of twinned towns Phase 1, 2009: Municipality of Varazdin

Action 1-Measure 1.1 Town twinning citizens' meetings 2009 - Phase 2: Omisalj

Action 1-Measure 1.1 Town Twinning Citizens' Meetings 2009 - Phase 3: 11/09/2009-14/09/2009, Primosten

Action 2-Measure 3 Support for projects initiated by civil society organizations 2009:

- Europe House Slavonski Brod, Attention! Seeding Youth Parliaments in Local Communities!, Antuna Barca 30, Slavonski Brod
- Green Action/Friends of the Earth Croatia, European Climate Meeting Croatia 2009, Frankopanska 1, pp 952, Zagreb
- Europe House Slavonski Brod, through extra curriculum activities of European Clubs to better Europe, Antuna Barca 30, Slavonski Brod
- Udruga Mladih Varazdinski Underground Klub, Stronger Together - On Policies Biskupecka 48, Varazdin
- Dociđp Zagreb Neighbours in Action Exchange of good practice, Development of new ideas and partnership, Dalmatinska 1, Zagreb
- Bjelovarski Centar za Razvoj Civilnoga Drustva Minority to Minority, Exchange of Experiences of Minority Cultural Associations, Social Dialogue Towards Regional Minority Development and Joint Integration, Zeljka Markovica, 60, Bjelovar

Action 4 - Active European Remembrance, Selection 2009:

- Cerd-Centar za Razvoj Demokracije Stop Fascism and Revision of History, special in Croatia because Antifascism is civilization travel future, Kraj SV Marije 1, Split, Croatia
- Udruga za Interdisciplinarna i Interkulturalna Istrazivanja Mnemosyne: Theatre of memories/Phase 1: Getting together 25, Olibska Street, Zagreb, Croatia



ALDA

ALDA - Association of Local Democracy Agencies

c/o Council of Europe

Avenue de l'Europe - 67075 Strasbourg, France
tel. 0033 390214593 • fax 0033 388412751

www.alda-europe.eu