



Association of the Local Democracy Agencies

E-panels
conference

Skopje,

3rd March 2010

FIRST ASSESSMENT ON EUROPEAN ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP IN SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE



Education and Culture DG

'Europe for Citizens' Programme



COUNCIL OF EUROPE
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Presentation of the Association of Local Democracy Agencies – ALDA

- a European NGO created in 1999 by the Congress of the Council of Europe
- based in Strasbourg
- has offices in Vicenza, Brussels, Subotica and Skopje
- coordinates 11 LDAs in the Balkans and Caucasus





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ALDA :

- promotes human rights, local democracy, local economic development and citizens' participation
- implements projects with a network of 300 members and partners



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ALDA in the SEE with 11 LDAs and a future one in Macedonia:



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You will find more information on our
website:

<http://alda-europe.eu/>





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Through ALDA's presence and 10 years experience in SEE, our association has recently conducted an assessment of the programme Europe for Citizens in the Balkans.



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Since 2007, EfC is potentially open for the candidate countries in SEE

Today operational in Croatia (2008), Republic of Macedonia and Albania since 2009

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 Balkan Countries in the programme differs quite a lot.



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Why EfC in South Eastern Europe ?

- Accompany the enlargement process to the EU of the candidate countries with further instruments
- To share at an early stage the concepts and activities promoted by the programme
- To develop with the communities of the future member States a common European Identity



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And

1 . to support local governance: local authorities development, civil society empowerment and citizens' participation

EfC **strengthens** and **completes** other EU programmes in the region (like Instruments for Pre- Accession)



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2. To support the **peace building process** and **transborder/cross border cooperation**

Opportunities offered by the project give additional instruments to build peace and to overcome local pending conflicts.

3. To support **mobility** and **get closer to Europe**.

Most of the projects include exchanges and it approaches communities from EU towards new Member States and vice versa.

(visa free regime for Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia from last Dec)



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Country by country implementation of EfC - Croatia :

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



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- civil society well structured
- professional, more and more used to EU programmes
- In general, CSO and LGs have a good capacity to apply and manage EU funds (even if still progress to do).
- Good support from the government (national point established)



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Macedonia :

Civil Society played an important role of lobbying for EfC. The support of ALDA was important with a first presentation in January 2009 with 50 participants and lot of interest raised.

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



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



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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.

Civil society weak and also LGs. Lack of information about the programme, no support from the government. Lack of interest for this programme (with low funding compared to IPA).

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Supporting Measures – Skodra Albania with support of polish and macedonian municipalities



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Others

For the time being, Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo and Bosnia Herzegovina are not part in the EfC.

Nevertheless, there is a great interest coming from the NGO sector. Numbers of twinning initiatives are currently promoted and on going.



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Critical points :

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 twinned 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



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Visas issue : difficult to feel as a European citizen without free movement (since Dec 2009, changes occurred)

Financial capacity of NGOs : needs for NGOs in Macedonia and Albania to specialise and network / For LGs, 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.



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Programmes :

- Active Citizenship Module in Croatia, Albania and Macedonia
- Youth in Action programmes
- Civil Society programmes (like ALDA and LDAs and supporting other LGs and CSO)
- Supporting Measures for Twinning activities (in cooperation with main European and local organisation like CEMR and its branches locally)



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Module Active Citizenship ALDA, partner NGO
Studiorum, Macedonia



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Youth group set up by Youth in Action programmes : Local Democracy Agency in Zavidovici, Bosnia and Herzegovina



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- Innovative actions and Citizens' panel in Croatia (with Region Istria leaders)
- E- panels today.
- Remembrance with Jasenovac (Croatian) and Memorial de Caen and other partners.



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Recommendations

1. Further support the programme EfC in the countries open already with further instruments (dissemination, translation of documents, link with local networks)
2. Link the programme EfC with other programmes of the Enlargement and dealing with governance and citizens' participation (DG Enlargement and CBC instruments)
3. Further enlarge the programme in the region
4. Value the programme EfC as a promoter of peace and stability in SEE



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E-panel project's objectives

1. Consolidating the methodology of “citizens’ panels”, with a new dimension, i.e. the e-dimension
2. Widening the number of participants in panels involved through the use of ICT and online forum
3. Generating discussion on a specific theme, i.e. citizen participation in Europe and what role volunteering can play in this regard
4. Including candidates 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



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E-panels' partners

Maison de l'Europe de Caen Basse-Normandie,
France

Fundacion Insula Barataria, Spain

Association for European Partnership, Bulgaria

Local Democracy Agency Osijek, Croatia

Local Democracy Agency Sisak, Croatia

Center for Regional Policy Research and
Cooperation 'Studiorum', Republic of Macedonia

NGO Horizont, Albania



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E-panels' activities and principle

Each partner selected 3 volunteers that will have the role of citizens' panels activators –

After a training on Active Citizenship and ICTs, each activator will spread the project in its network and gather 10 citizens to participate on the online forums –

A specific website will be created, with local online forums during 6 months –

A final conference presenting the results of the project will take place in Croatia at the end of the year.

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Thank you for your attention!

Wishing you a good conference!

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