



REGIONALNA PARTNERSTVA ZA INTERKULTURNU SARADNJU
REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS FOR INTERCULTURAL EXCHANGE
Wolverhampton - Subotica - Osijek - Mostar



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NEWSLETTER



LIGHT HOUSE

LEAD APPLICANT: Subotica – City Administration

PARTNERS: Association of Local Democracy Agencies – ALDA, Light House – Media Centre – Wolverhampton, UK, Local Democracy Agency Osijek, Local Democracy Agency Mostar, Local Democracy Agency Subotica

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The final conference of the project “Regional partnerships for intercultural exchange” (www.regionalicc.net) was held in Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina, from the 30th March till the 2nd April, 2011. It involved all the partners of the project: the City administration of Subotica (www.subotica.rs), the Association of Local Democracy Agencies (www.alda-europe.eu), Light House Media Centre from Wolverhampton (www.light-house.co.uk), Local Democracy Agency Subotica (www.lda-subotica.org), Local Democracy Agency Osijek (www.ldaosijek.hr), Local Democracy Agency Mostar (www.ldamostar.ba). The conference gave an overview of the activities implemented within the framework of this project.

During the Final Conference of the project, which was held in Mostar, there were 6 different thematic sessions. The sessions covered the issues of the minorities’ participation at local level, moving from multicultural co-existence to intercultural governance, municipal service provision in culturally diverse communities, the role of the civil society in a new dialogue and reconciliation in the region. Each session had its own panelists (speakers) who were brought out most important views and opinions and tried to connect every theme of session with the aims and objectives of the project.

The main components of this project were: capacity building, regional exchange and networking, promoting good intercultural governance, and creating information and communication tools. Among the main activities implemented were series of three training seminars under the common title: School of local democracy. The first one was organized in Subotica, in August 2009.: “European standards of minority rights protection – from legal regulation to local practice” while a youth camp in Osijek “Intercultural dialogue and understanding” was held in November 2010. As a partner of the project, the Light House Media Centre of Wolverhampton filmed three documentaries about Mostar, Osijek and Subotica and their intercultural aspects. In addition, during project implementation a number of publications were produced including leaflets, promo publications, city intercultural guides, a collection of written contributions called “Essays on intercultural governance at local level” and the electronic newsletters.



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The opening session

Ms. Stanka Parać Damjanović, project manager and facilitator of this session, wished a warm welcome and thanked all the participants from Mostar, Osijek and Subotica, with most warm welcome to participants from Moldova, also present on the Conference. Ms. Parać gave an overview of the project activities implemented since May 2009. She underlined main project components: Capacity building component, Regional exchange/networking component, Promoting good intercultural governance, and Communication and information tools produced, as well as project results.

The key-note speakers who addressed the participants during the opening session were: Mr. Ljubo Bešlić - Mayor of the city of Mostar, Mr. Slavko Parać - president of the City Assembly of Subotica, Mr. Jovan Jelić - Deputy Prefect of Osijek Baranja County and Ms. Suzan Arslan – Project Manager in DG Enlargement Regional Programmes.

Mr. Ljubo Bešlić wished a warm welcome on behalf of the City of Mostar. He said that this project aims to help create a better outlook for dialogue and cooperation among diverse national communities in our region. Cooperation has no alternative and is the only tool for regaining the trust among people, and it is

trust that can help bridge the consequences of the recent past.

Mr. Slavko Parać reiterated that this regional project is important from the view of improving the cooperation between NGO sector and Local authorities in cities involved. This project explores the possibilities for the harmonization of relations through culture. Mr. Parać explained also the importance of understanding of the notions of multiculturalism and interculturalism. He spoke about the situation in Subotica since late nineties regarding nationalism of different colors and underlined the current aspirations of the local government Subotica to seek adequate mechanisms of moving from traditional multicultural coexistence toward intercultural governance.

Mr. Jovan Jelić thanked to the Mostar local government as the host city, thanked all participants from region and EU states, and made an open call to all: to make an next step forward – from multiculturalism

into interculturalism. Mr. Jelic informed about the work of the elected bodies at the county level, saying that this has become a good practice example of the respect for multicultural composure of the local community and intercultural understanding, considering that the ethnic Serbian have been appointed as a Deputy Prefect of Osijek Baranja County. He underlined the importance of this two years Programme, saying that without the mutual understanding of diverse cultures there will be no coexistence in our communities.



SESSION 1:

Minorities and participation at local level

Session was facilitated by Mr. Owen Masters, coordinator of CoE Confidence Building Measures in Moldova. He reiterated the importance of regional projects that help get participants from different parts of Europe closer and to present their local practices, while the conference itself may serve as the potential grounds for networking of good practices from the Western Balkans, EU member states. The guest participants from Moldova will surely gain much through interactive debate and dialogue with their counterparts from Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. He also stressed that the project is a great example of good practice, implemented in three countries in the Balkans. Besides Mr. Masters, Miss Olga Perušić – LDA Subotica Delegate, Mr. Dušan Marjanović – Croat minority organization from Szeged and Mr. Stevan Nikolić also presented their activities at local level and the wish for further networking. Interesting

views and importance of multicultural dialog was raised by Mr. Stevan Nikolic, director of Roma Education Centre form Subotica. Thorough his presentation called: „inclusion, the path to the equal individual”, he presented the problems of assimilation of Roma people in Subotica, paths and methods from assimilation to social equality and aspect of intecultralism in this process. He believes: „Cornerstone of intercultural society is the inclusion of all strata of society”.





SESSION 2:

From multicultural coexistence to intercultural governance

This panel was facilitated by MR. Gunnar Mandt from the European Wergeland Centre (EWC), Oslo. Ms. Caroline Gebara, presented work of the EWC in the sector of education and the co-operation with Council of Europe's programmes particularly in areas of education for democratic citizenship. Mr. Mandt has marked this project as very well structured, with high aims reached and objectives fulfilled. As the experienced former school principal, he explained the importance of education of youth and of the committed professional trainers and educators in the process



acquiring the knowledge necessary for the respect of human and minority rights. He also said that through the work of his EW Center, they are trying to: "Bridge the gap between policy and practice".

Ms. Caroline Gebara presented the EWC activities through practical examples of different training programmes, such as: Democracy at school project, and Whole school approach, relying mainly on the CoE programmes aimed to improving the education for human and minority rights.

Mr. Svetislav Milanković from City Museum of Subotica presented the theme of interculturalism from the cultural institution aspect. He explained the historic background of cultural diversity of Subotica region through interesting examples: the differences between nouns which are in daily use in our area. He described cultural heritage of Subotica, shortly presented work of the

City Museum, as a specific meeting point connecting historic legacy with modern art expressions of interculturalism.

SESSION 3:

Municipal service provision in culturally diverse communities

This session was designed as a showcase of mechanisms and tools introduced by the local governments and the municipal services provided to citizens in support to intercultural dialogue. Ms. Jlenia Destito, researcher at Ipres Institute from Puglia Region, Italy,



was the facilitator of the panel and she presented experiences in south Italy in relation with the integration of migrants. She spoke about interculturalism from the point of integration of migrants and made comparative analysis of this process in four Mediterranean states. Her presentation "Migration governance in Apulia Region: a pilot action on social housing" intended to picture the importance of legal/illegal status and social inclusion/exclusion of migrants in contexts of multiculturalism; explaining the migration policies on Apulia experience in migration governance: the policy for migrants' housing.

Ms. Gill Claydon made a comprehensive overview of participatory planning process in small communities in Devon, England, involving information, consultation and citizen participation in policy/decision making. Specific good practice were mentioned about engaging the volunteers, the principles of social responsibility and solidarity of young

people in three municipalities resulting in new social and health care services.

SESSION 4:

Civil society as an actor of a new dialogue and reconciliation in the region



On the fourth panel Mr. Vehid Šehić as facilitator, Mr. Goran Bubalo, Mr. Damir Jurić, Mr. Jovan Komšić, Mr. Boško Kovačević, and Ms. Dženana Dedić presented their views from the point of CSO experts and practitioners. This panel inspired a vivid debate, partly because of the original approach and partly because of their experience and expertise gained during long years of engaging with CSO-s in the region, as the sector comprising a wide range of actors and perhaps with a more optimistic perception related with its further role in europeanisation of the Western Balkan region. The panelists brought forward their key questions and dilemmas, discussed the problem of multiculturalism and interculturalism in their regions; presented their aspirations on this issue and outlined the capacity of interculturalism and multiculturalism as a possible way for resolving the key challenges of democratic transformation. In this context panelists were defined the role and importance of NGO sector in the process of good local governance, promotion of democratic values and possibilities for development basis of intercultural dialogue and equality principles.

Closing session of the project:

Opportunities for Civil society and local self-governments in cross border /regional co-operation programmes



During the closing session facilitated by Stanka Parać Damjanovic, the panelists were Mr. Istvan Hegedus and Ms. Beata Huszka, from Hungarian Europe Society Budapest, Ms. Sanela Tunovic, TACSO Regional Programme officer Sarajevo and Mr. Miljenko Turniski – delegate from LDA Osijek. Regional co-operation initiatives were highlighted in all the presen-

tations, including the role of the Hungarian EU presidency in EU integration of the Western Balkans and the potential involvement of CSO-s and local governments in the Danube strategy and in existent regional programmes (such as the DKMT euro-region). The participants were also informed about the TACSO regional programme of technical assistance

to CSO-s and their capacity building and networking opportunities. In his concluding notes, Mr. Miljenko Turniski noted that there was a high level of common understanding achieved during the conference and that both during the panels and during aside events there were many opportunities for discussing the follow-up activities while the interaction and debate are an evidence that CSO-s and local governments have a substantial role to play on the way to EU integration of the Western Balkan countries.

Joint cultural programme

After the conference the joint cultural programme was organized with the assistance of young actors – facilitators members of the Mostar Youth Theatre. They recited famous verses by the well known poets from Bosnia and Herzegovina and presented the local folk groups and singers. Members of the Macedonian youth association from Osijek, folk dancers and singers from Mostar area were performing traditional songs for more than one hundred participants and guests.

Study visit to Mostar historic sites

On 2nd April the conference participants had a guided study tour visiting old monuments and historic sites in the downtown area of Mostar, while certainly the walking across the old bridge was among the most attractive experience, particularly for the participants from Moldova.

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