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WE NEED REMEMBRANCE FOR A PEACEFUL FUTURE

By Per Vinther, ALDA President

On January 27th, 1945, 66 years ago, the German concentration and extermination camp of Auschwitz-Birkenau was liberated by the Russian Army, giving name to the International Holocaust Memorial Day on that date every year.

A new Europe has been built on the ruins of war and hatred, with the conviction that something like the Shoah should never be allowed to happen again.

Against such a back-ground Local Democracy Agencies were established in the wake of the conflict leading to the break-up of the former Yugoslavia with the objective of helping to build a society founded on democratic principles, rule of law and respect for human and minority rights.

Engaging various ethnic groups in this endeavour and at times mediating between them has reconfirmed to the Local Democracy Agencies and their umbrella organisation the Association of Local Democracy Agencies (ALDA) that the past plays an important role in shaping a future based on tolerance and reconciliation.

Together with its partners, ALDA works daily for intercultural understanding and active participation of citizens in its programme on Active Remembrance. The President of ALDA, Per Vinther, stresses that "one of our goals is to bring people to remember their past and learn from mistakes their ancestors have made! This also has a direct bearing on the appreciation of the benefits of living in a democratic society"

The Association of Local Democracy Agencies, ALDA, is heavily engaged in promoting active citizenship within the EU Programme "Europe for Citizens" and in that vein has embarked also on the project E-For, Education for Remembrance, as a natural element of active citizenship.

Currently, the project PEACE (Peace Education and Active Citizenship in Europe) reunites partners from all over Europe to reflect upon innovative ways of transmitting knowledge of past crimes and injustice to generations having grown up in a peaceful society. New pedagogic methodologies are currently being tested in local events and will be discussed in an international conference uniting experts on historical education as well as local authorities and NGOs interested in implementing projects on active remembrance.

Thus, ALDA is linking its involvement for better local governance with the struggle for active remembrance that is so crucial for the survival of our peaceful and democratic societies.