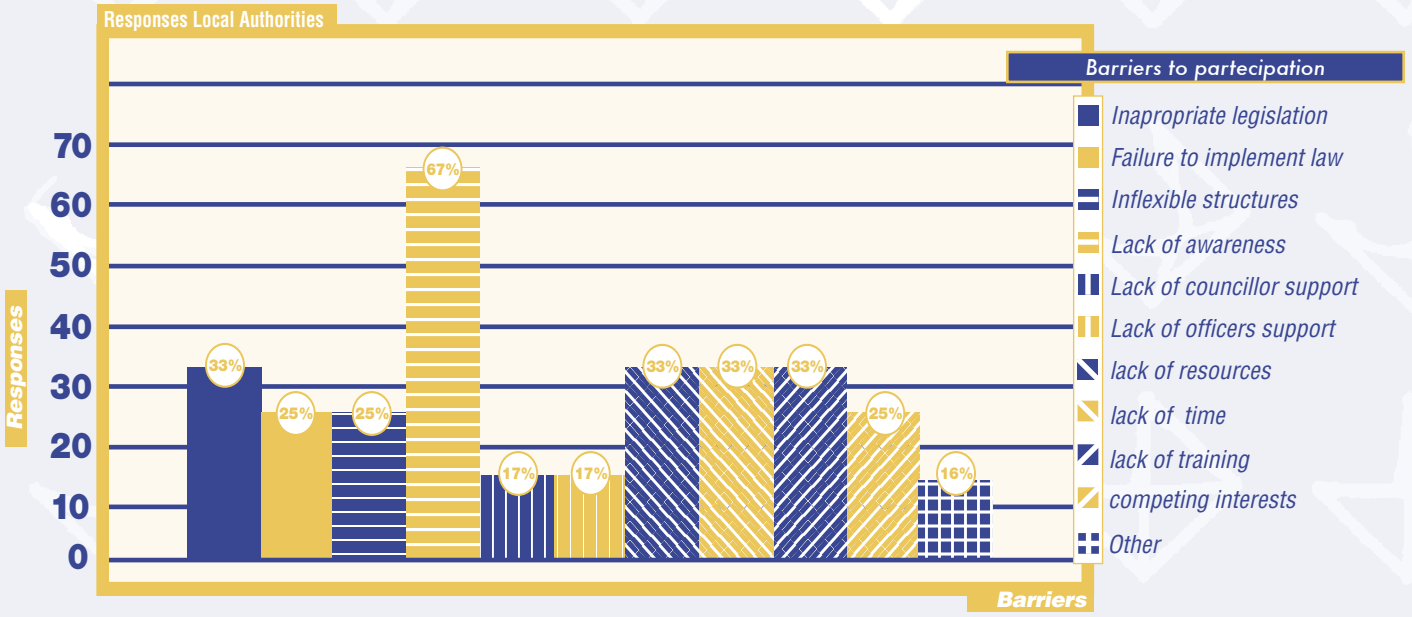
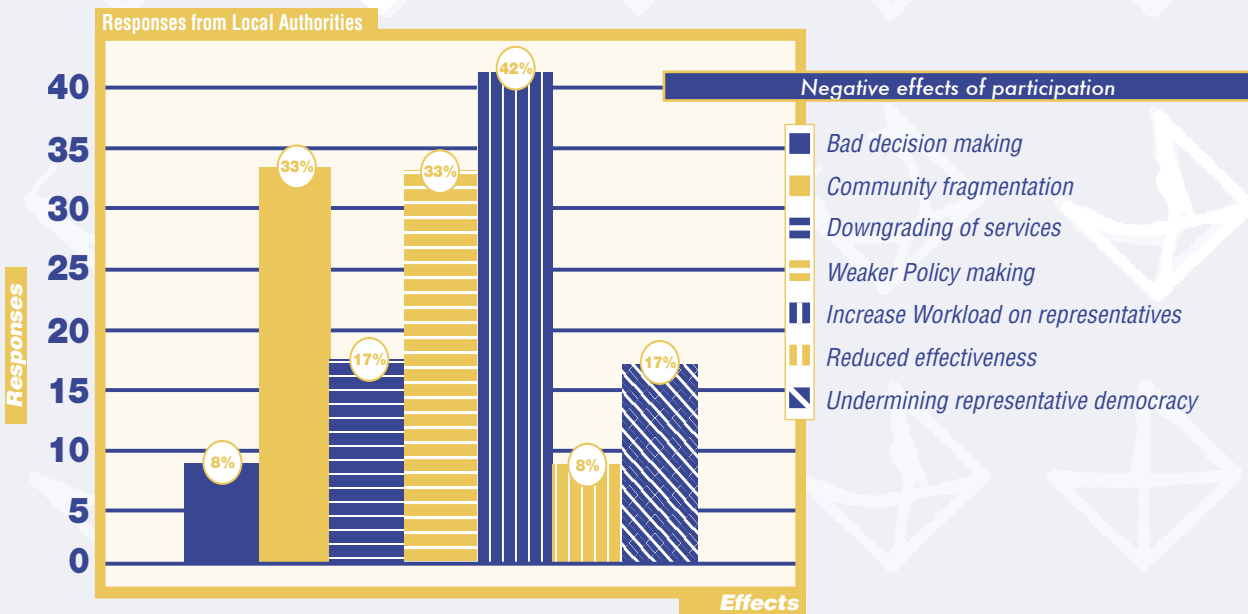


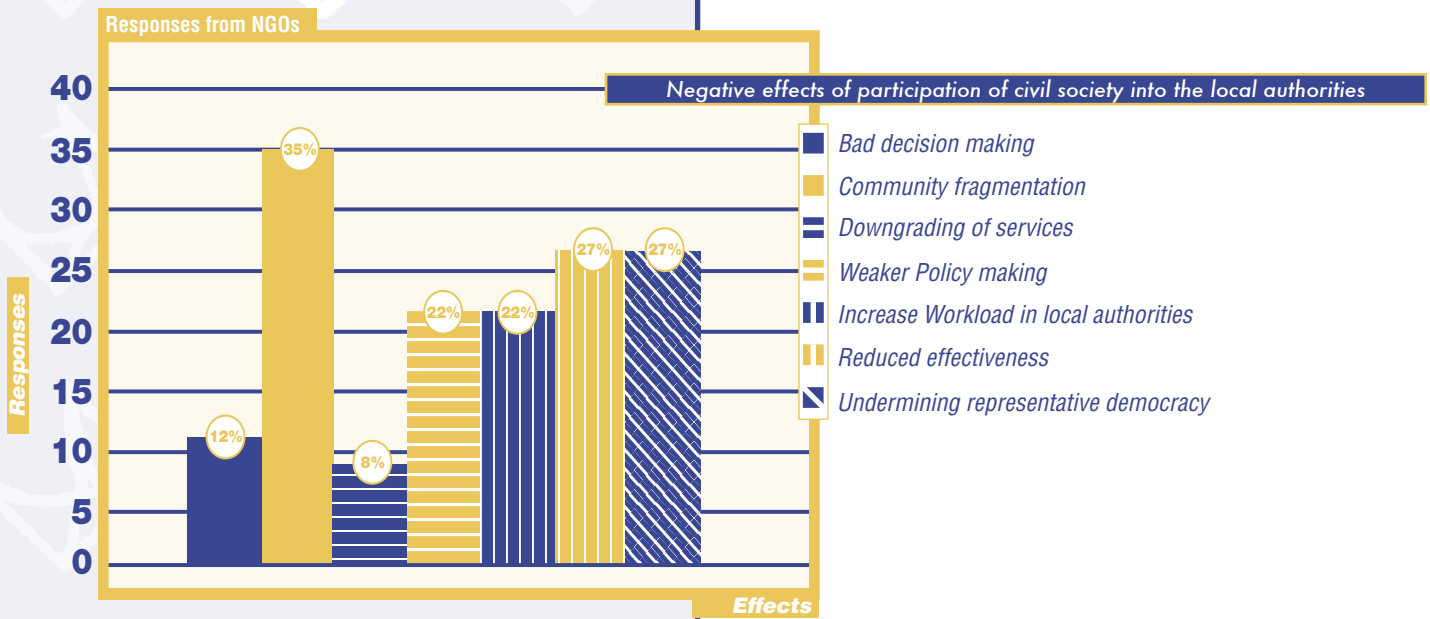
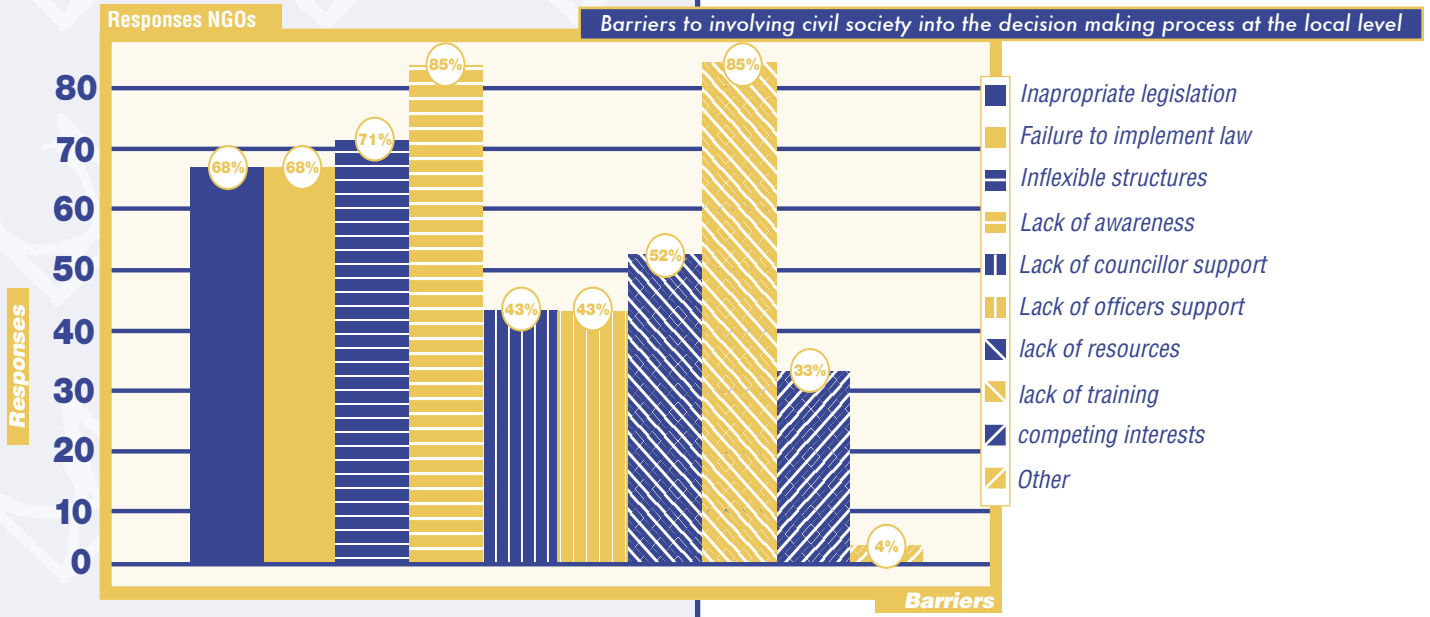
- | Responses Local Authorities | Responses NGOs |
|--|---|
| <p>Starting from the most encouraged:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Empowerment of disabled people 2. Urbanism and Public Utilities 3. Youth/Children participation 4. Empowerment of women 5. Social Health Sector 6. Culture 7. Local Development 8. Education policies | <p>Starting from the most encouraged:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Youth and children 2. Local Development 3. Disabled people 4. Culture 5. Education policies 6. Women empowerment 7. Social health sector 8. Urbanism and public services |

6. What in your experience are the barriers to civil society's participation in the decision-making process at the local level?

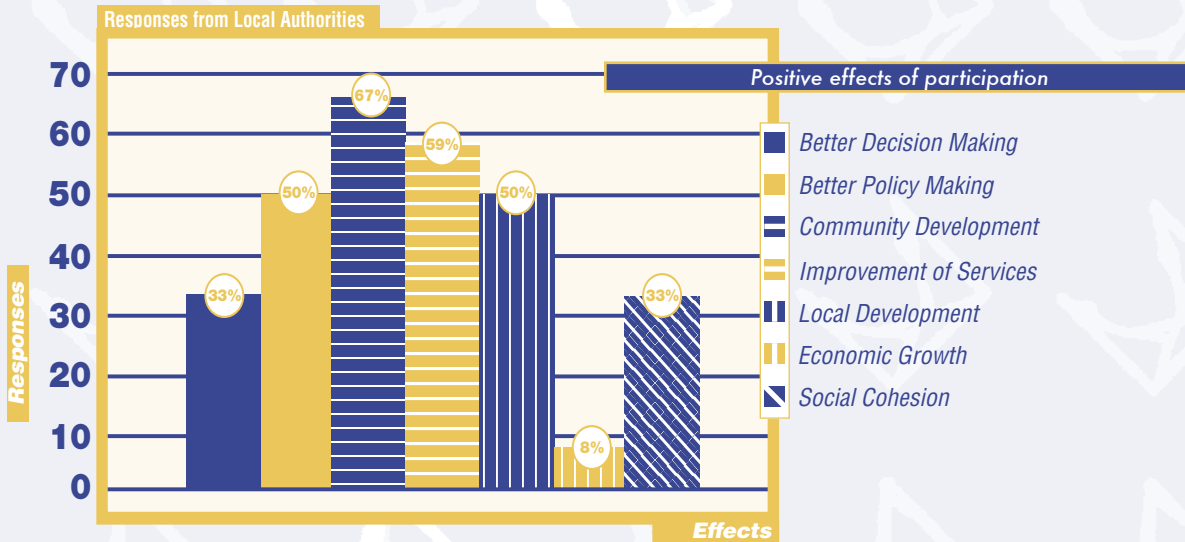


7. What are the problems that you think civil society's participation in the decision-making process has brought to your local authority?





8. What are the benefits that active participation of civil society in the decision-making process has brought to your local authority?



9. In your experience, what are the most important values that could be considered a common value for building a Europe of the citizens?

Selection of the best case studies of how to include civil society in the decision-making process at the local level

From the Local Authorities

a) Zavidovici: Bosnia and Herzegovina

LDA Zavidovici (Bosnia-Herzegovina)

The Municipality of Zavidovici is encouraging civil society participation in local decision-making processes, through assemblies, public debates and referenda. More specifically, the LDA Zavidovici, for which the involvement of civil society is fundamental, constituted in 1999 Local Citizens' Committees composed of representatives of associations and NGOs as well as individuals, all issued from different ethnic groups. The aim of these Committees was above all to offer a space for discussion and participation, so that civil society becomes an active protagonist in their community.

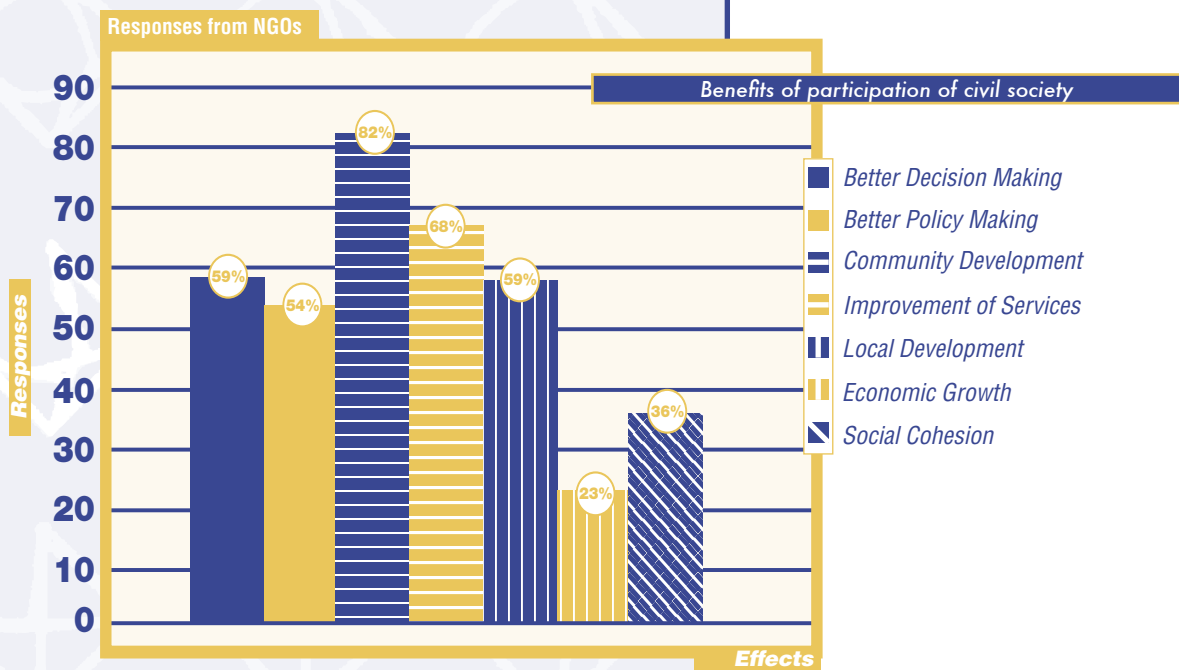
Finally, for the LDA Zavidovici, civil society participation cannot be forced, it is a complex process linked to various factors, first of all linked the particularities of the territory. Further, civil participation is a recent process, even in

Western societies, which is not necessarily transferable in the same terms and ways to other contexts.

'Civil society participation cannot be forced, it is a complex process linked to various factors, first of all the specificity of the territory' LDA Zavidovici

The Municipality of Zavidovici changed its Statute in order to give citizens more possibilities for participation in the work of the Municipal Council and the decision-making process. Citizens have the right to participate in discussions and management of municipal affairs through the assembly of citizens, referenda, submitting citizens' initiatives and through the process of decision-making in the Municipal Council. There are favourable procedural rules for direct citizen participation.

During regular consultation with young people, they proposed an initiative



Responses by Local Authorities

- Active participation and responsibility of citizens
- capacity of citizens to avail themselves of services at local level
- capacities of local governments in providing services
- principles of the European Charter on Local self-Government
- cultural diversity
- respect of law
- human rights
- unique economic space
- freedom of movement
- no borders between countries
- living standards and equality
- European citizenship and identity
- peace
- freedom
- democracy
- help to the non-developed countries
- mutual understanding
- solidarity
- the rule of law
- confidence in better future
- national cultures

Responses NGOs

The majority of the replies focused on the theme of respect of human rights such as tolerance, safety, security, justice and gender.

The other theme mentioned is cooperation: between citizens and local government, trans-border cross-sectoral, interethnic. The main point is the democratic process that allowed all the parts of the population to solve the problems together without wars and to improve the participation of the citizens in the decision-making process, including the principle of subsidiarity.

for the reconstruction of the city monuments. The initiative was supported by the municipal administration. Part of the needed financial resources was funded by the Municipality or was provided by international sponsors.

b) Association of Armenian towns

In two communities – urban and rural – public councils of representatives of civil society have been set up, comprising representatives of particular spheres, for instance, youth and women representatives. Procedures for their participation in shaping relevant sectoral policies and in decision-making processes have been developed. In particular, they participated in debates on the local budget of 2004.

c) Buskerund County (Norway)

The process of describing a vision for the city of Drammen: The process lasted more than 1 year involving most of the inhabitants of the city in seminars, public meetings, small talking groups etc.

d) Kragujevac (Serbia and Montenegro)

The City of Kragujevac has joined modern local authorities in their democratic systems, with the intention of including citizens in the decision-making process at the local level. Therefore, the Executive Board of the City established the Consultative Council for local media within "The Programme for local self-government reform (SLGRP)". The council consists of the representatives of the University, the Serbian Orthodox Church, ethnic groups and an independent association of journalists, theatre, trade unions, nongovernmental organizations and entrepreneurial associations. The Consultative Council for local media observes the work of the local media, especially those formed by the local government, identifies problems and gives advice in order to overcome possible problems in this area

e) Prijedor (Bosnia and Herzegovina)

The city of Prijedor involves its citizens in the following activities:

- infrastructure projects for the needs of citizens
- urbanism and spatial planning of the development
- development and increasing in agriculture
- certain cultural activities
- debates - equality of women gender
- projects - domestic violence
- meetings with representatives of local communities

LDA Prijedor (Bosnia-Herzegovina)

The LDA Prijedor supports the NGO sector and promotes its cooperation with local governmental institutions through seminars, working groups and exchange of experiences. One of the aims of these activities is to foster and emphasise the competences that NGOs have gained over the years and therefore the relevant role they can play as partners of the local government for the benefit of the whole society.

More concretely, the LDA Prijedor has implemented several projects dealing with the involvement of civil society organisations in the decision-making process. Here are some examples:

- The creation of a working group on Transparency and Reform of the Public Administration (in cooperation with OSCE Prijedor, USAID, Municipality of Prijedor) in 2002. In 2003, the working group promoted the opening of the Citizens Information Centre and the first public budget hearing of the Municipality of Prijedor. It is currently working on criteria for the allocation of municipal resources to the NGO sector and on the preparation of this year's public budget hearing. The working group includes NGOs of Prijedor and aims at strengthening relations between the Municipality and its citizens based on trust and transparency.
- The public budget hearing is a tool to make citizens and NGOs to participate in one very important decision-making process, that is setting up a budget and definition of the priorities of the community. In this process, NGOs have a special role of advocacy of citizens' interests and needs. Therefore, in the organisation of the public budget hearing in 2003, the LDA held a preparatory meeting for NGOs in order to discuss together the priority needs of the community and a common strategy for the public budget hearing.
- Promotion of youth empowerment and its

participation in the local life: the LDA has supported the creation of youth centres in the area of Prijedor and together with OSCE Prijedor is promoting the creation of the Youth Council of the Municipality of Prijedor as an advisory and monitoring body on youth issues for the local government. Moreover, the LDA organises yearly a 'School for Peace' where young people are trained on conflict resolution, cooperation, networking, cohesion among actors of the civil society, and on how to advocate local needs and represent them towards the local institutions.

Responses from NGOs

CROATIA:

1. The **youth board** in the City of Osijek consists of five representatives from youth politicians and four from youth NGOs. The youth Board is financed by the City of Osijek and every year offers grants for youth projects and decides which project will be implemented. The youth Board has made Local Youth Policy.
2. **Osijek Greens** is an environmental NGO acting on the local, regional and national level, based in the city of Osijek. Local activities of this NGO are aimed at improving and making the decision-making process of the local municipality, industry and private businesses transparent. All projects of this NGO involve local inhabitants' support and participation. Citizens are invited to denounce pollution and polluters, illegal devastation, public problems related to air, soil, water, parks and others. Members of the NGO take action. They call institutions, the media, journalists or start petitions. Some of them resulted in an improved institutional care for city parks of which one is legally protected now.
3. **LDA Osijek** as a local NGO which initiated the idea of celebrating the Day of Europe and European Week in their local community, as well as establishing a Youth City Council in the town of Osijek (cf. above). In that way, they promoted European values at the local level and participated in the decision-making process.

"Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia":

The **Local Democracy Agency in Ohrid** delivered 3 days of training on «Youth participation in the decision-making process» and the materials the participants developed at the end of this event will help the development and implementation of participatory planning processes and the concept of democracy. They will give the young people or youth groups a strong tool in the implementation of democratic and cultural cohesion and will consequently improve their local quality of life.

Bosnia and Herzegovina:

1. The first public budget hearing in the **Municipality of Prijedor** was promoted by the Working Group on Transparency and the Reform of Public Administration (in which participate the following groups: Municipality of Prijedor, Local Democracy Agency, OSCE, USAID, local NGOs), which was organised by the Municipality of Prijedor in December 2003. The budget draft of the Municipality was made public (Citizens Information Centre, internet website of the Municipality), a seminar about municipal budgeting for representatives of NGOs was organised to promote the definition of a common strategy for civil society, and finally a public debate on the budget draft was held where the municipal heads of departments listened to citizens' proposals and answered citizens' questions.
2. Creation of the **Citizens' Information Centre** on the municipal level. In this process, the representatives of the civil sector actively participated in the creation of this centre.
3. The **project «Open Classroom»** intended to build civil society in cooperation with children and their parents of different societal groups including returnees, refugees, potential returnees and Roma, through workshops on dialogue, non-violent communication, active listening, all in order to strengthen the co-existence and reconciliation between these groups.
4. The **project «Prijedor - Town of Coexistence and Reconciliation»** consists of debates, round tables, workshops with children (primary and secondary school age) and their parents of all societal groups including returnees, refugees, potential returnees and others.



Welcome Addresses

Teresa Sera, Representative of the Ayuntamiento of Barcelona

Ms Sera explained that the City of Barcelona can offer its experience for this conference: democracy, defence and international solidarity are indeed part of Barcelona's values. As far as local democracy is concerned, the City improved the participation of its citizens in different ways: the health sector, schools and the quality of life have been improved thanks to local democracy.

She also underscored another element: the question of identity, which is not an easy process. Today, Barcelona accepts difference as part of its identity.

Finally, Ms Sera insisted on the town-twinning activities with Sarajevo: Barcelona provided humanitarian aid and satellite communication and contributed to the reconstruction of the city. The war in the Balkans meant a threat for the entire Europe and therefore the City of Barcelona support 40 associations in the region.

Giovanni Di Stasi, President of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities (Council of Europe)

Mr Di Stasi highlighted the aim of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, an organisation of 46 member states which aims at promoting the rule of law, pluralistic democracy and human rights. The Congress has taken a close interest in various aspects of efforts to reinforce local democracy in the member states of the Council of Europe. In this context, special mention can be made of the legal instruments and conventions that have been drafted by the Congress, and which are at the disposal of member states, in particular:

- the Revised European Charter on the participation of young people in municipal and regional life
- the Convention on the Participation of Foreigners in Public Life at local level

The Congress is convinced that citizens' readiness to assume responsibilities and to participate in political affairs depends on the state of local self-government in the member states of the Council of Europe. With the adoption of the European Charter of Local Self-Government, a common European standard for assessing local self-government in the member states of the Council of Europe was established. According to the European Charter, the fundamental principles on which local self-government is based are autonomy (local authorities' responsibility for their own administrative and financial affairs) and citizenship (forms and means of participation).

Democracy is not confined to the act of voting. Citizens can and must be allowed to influence politics in other ways. This entails not only developing forms of direct democracy but also exploiting the knowledge and commitment of citizens, as those directly affected by political and administrative decisions, to arrive at appropriate solutions acceptable to local people. This makes it necessary to develop a culture of dialogue between administrative authorities, politicians, citizens, social groups, associations, representatives of industry and other operators.

Steps and measures should therefore be taken to encourage direct public participation in local decision-making and the management of local affairs. This can consist of setting-up consultative bodies, such as municipal youth council, council of foreigners, of elderly people and so forth.

We believe that reinforcing public motivation and participation is of critical importance to the future viability of our cities and regions. Municipal authorities should be required to establish support structures capable of assisting members of the public, movements and associations in

their efforts to participate in shaping local community life. In this context, we should mention the important work done by senior citizens' organisations, the voluntary sector, environmental agencies related to the Local Agenda 21, associations, networks and foundations. Internet sites and active complaints management can be useful means of identifying problems of substance or procedure in administrative, infrastructure or other fields;

Let me recall some success factors that make for greater public participation which have been identified by the Congress:

- citizens, men and women, must feel that they are taken seriously. Municipal authorities can best achieve this by issuing convincing invitations to cooperate and participate, taking account of citizens' possibilities, motives and concerns. In particular, they should recognise the specific difficulties that women have in participating in political life and take steps to overcome these;

- members of the public, associations and movements can also be motivated through praise and encouragement (through

honours, public recognition, certification possibilities, reimbursement of expenses, sponsoring);

- where members of the public or organisations help to achieve budgetary savings in any way, they should receive part of those savings as a contribution to their voluntary work;

- we need to appeal to all population groups and give them the opportunity to participate, municipal authorities may need to adopt a stronger, more specific approach to certain groups. Citizens like to be addressed as individuals, not just as members of the general public. Communication campaigns alone are therefore not enough;

- when promoting new forms of public participation, the traditional voluntary sector must not be overlooked. Members of associations and groups who have long been assuming important responsibilities on a voluntary basis must not be given the impression that their services are no longer recognised in political circles.

The conference in Barcelona is a useful contribution to enrich the work which is currently carried out by the Local Democracy Agencies and by the Congress, which is currently identifying best practices at European level to enhance citizens' participation.



1st session:

"The participation of civil society in the decision-making process: a common European Value"

Introduction by Antonella Valmorbida, ALDA Director

Ms Valmorbida drew the attention to the fact that the year 2004 was an important year for the European Union: the convention and the enlargement were key events.

ALDA and the LDAs work on European identity as a common value: indeed, the networks of ALDA and the LDAs think of Europe in a large term.

She defined the objective of the conference: to debate and to understand whether the participation of citizens in the decision-making process is shared by everybody.

She stressed that experience of ALDA and the LDAs show that citizens' participation is enhanced by the attitude of their local authorities.