

CONGRES DES POUVOIRS LOCAUX ET REGIONAUX DE L'EUROPE
CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES OF EUROPE



Strasbourg, 15 April 2002

CG/Forum Novi Sad (8) 10
Provisional version
English only

**FORUM OF CITIES AND REGIONS
OF SOUTH-EAST EUROPE**

9TH ECONOMIC FORUM

To promote partnerships with cities and regions
of South-East Europe

NOVI SAD, 18 -20 APRIL 2002

**PARTNERSHIP OF EUROPEAN LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES
WITH SOUTH EAST EUROPE**

Document prepared by Ms Antonella VALMORBIDA,
Director of the Association of the Local Democracy Agencies

INDEX

Before starting ...

Foreword

I PART

➤ **Evolution of the partnership with the SEE local authorities**

Strengthening the international cooperation at local and regional tiers of government

New phase for the international role of the local authorities in Europe

The role of NGOs

Solidarity and humanitarian aid during the war in former Yugoslavia

Post-war recovery and the long term commitment to development and stability

Network support

➤ **Methodology for the partnerships**

Partnership City to City

Cities and NGOs

NGOs and NGOs

Una tantum activity

Long term programmes

Participatory planning process

Transborder co-operation

National and international programmes

➤ **Issues**

Institution and capacity building (local authorities, NGOs)

Development of civil society

Culture

Education

Youth/children

Media

Economic co-operation

Infrastructure

Institutional contacts

Humanitarian assistance

Environment protection

➤ **Difficulties and opportunities**

➤ **Trends**

II PART – Per country

➤ **Italy**

➤ **France**

➤ **Germany**

➤ **UK**

➤

III PART Developing partnership at regional level : the role of the LDA network

➤ **The network of the LDAs represents**

➤ **Offices of the Local Democracy Agencies**

➤ **The mandate of the LDAs is**

➤ **The LDAs programme receives the support of**

- **Co-operation with the Stability Pact for South and Eastern Europe**
- **The activities promoted by the Agencies**
- **The partnership from European towns and regions :**
- **LDAs' partnership network**

IV PART Proposals for the future

- **Establishment of a data base of partnerships between towns and regions of Europe in co-operation with SEE**
- **Providing information for the local authorities in Europe and South and Eastern Europe on potential partnerships between cities and regions**
- **Support to the networks for the partnerships between cities and regions**
- **Follow up of the 9th Economic Forum for Cities and Regions of SEE**

V Sources of information

VI. Partnerships' list

- **Italy**
- **France**
- **UK**
- **Germany**
- **Switzerland**
- **Greece**
- **Ireland**
- **Belgium**
- **Austria**
- **Spain**

Before starting

The present document has been drafted following the request of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities which has been persistently supporting the democratisation process in South and Eastern Europe over the last years, by facilitating and enabling the involvement of European local authorities. These activities lead to the accession of Croatia in the Council of Europe in 1996 and for BiH later on. The same procedure will be followed by other countries of the SEE. The first results of this research and the evaluation on the partnerships between cities and regions will be presented at the 9th Economic Forum of the cities and regions of SEE, to be held in Novi Sad (Serbia) from the 18th to the 20th of April 2002.

The information given here are not aimed at presentation of an complete list of the partnerships established between European towns and regions with the SEE region. It is rather an initial attempt, realised in a two months work, of assessing the level and the quality of participation of local authorities in this field. The present document needs to be completed (especially for certain countries of Europe and for certain topics) and regularly updated.

Moreover, this document is very much the result of the personal experience developed through the network of Local Democracy Agencies. In order to complete the information that were missing, specific indicators have been collected from papers, reports and laws and several interviews with a number of key people have been made.

The partnerships here presented are to a large extent focused on Serbia and Montenegro. This is due to the recent attention for these countries after ten years long isolation. Most of the international and governmental programmes designed to support the actions of the local authorities, over the last two years, are specifically focused on this area. The expected improvement of this document will try to keep a detailed and precise record of the partnerships existing also with the other countries of the SEE.

Another problem which has been encountered is the evaluation, as far as the time is concerned, of the "activity" of the partnership. The focus has been put to the partnerships which have been initiated over the last 4 years. The document does not provide a precise indication of the different commitments year by year, but it contains a general overview of the contacts and programmes. When figures are given, they are usually clearly referred to a certain period of time.

It will be highly appreciated, in the future, if the readers and stakeholders of partnership programmes could participate in the improvement and completion of the document by keeping the Association of the Local Democracy Agencies informed about their activities in various forms of decentralised co-operation.

Foreword

Cooperation between cities, regions and NGOs, from Europe, in South Eastern Europe is one of the most innovative and relevant phenomenon of the international cooperation processes taking place over the last several years. It is characterised by a large number of actors and a high level of employment of available resources (both human and financial).

It is almost impossible to give a complete overview of all the partnerships established among European subjects and their counterparts in SEE. Nevertheless, a first attempt offers the understanding of its dimension and quality. It is also interesting to note how the partnership process has changed over the past period and to identify the future trends.

The activities of the local authorities and NGOs, in South and Eastern Europe, can be understood and analysed in regard with two periods : during the war and the years immediately following the conflict (1991-1997) – if we consider the war in Kosovo as a separate issue - and the post-war years (1998 up to now). The substance of the partnership has substantially changed in those two periods and so has the participation of the different actors.

This process has also been developed into an institutional framework given the action of the international community in the area : the Erdut Agreement (for Eastern Slavonia), the Dayton Agreement and the activity of OHR (for Bosnia and Herzegovina), the Stability Pact for South and Eastern Europe, the programme of the United Nations and in particular, the work of UNHCR. All the projects which have been implemented and which will be carried out in the future, need to be included in this complex context comprising the local structures, national policies and international programmes.

SEE received support from the international community as well as from cities, regions and associations. Sometimes, these contributions were not systematic and produced overlapping. In the difficult period of transition, from a socialist system to a market oriented system, there is no doubt that the local level of authority is the more appropriate for identifying the needs of the population and for keeping a direct contact with them, as their representative. The commitment of the European local authorities is also oriented to support local democracy and to strengthen the mechanisms for a peaceful coexistence and stability in a region so close to the European Union member states.

Southeast Europe is, on one hand, very close to the attention of the European Union, because of the aftermath of the war and because of its geographic proximity, on the other. The region has not yet been involved in the mainstream programmes of the EU enlargement process, since they are not being considered for the pre-accession rounds. However, some countries have (like Croatia), established contract of Stabilisation and Association.

Partnerships between local authorities and NGOs are able to ensure long lasting effects, as they directly communicate with the citizens, creating human contacts and mutual exchanges of experiences. They should be considered as a practical tool for a comprehensive development of South Eastern Europe but also, without doubts, as enrichment for the EU member States themselves.

I PART

➤ Evolution of the partnership with the SEE local authorities

Strengthening of the international cooperation of local and regional authorities

Local authorities have been recognised – as determined by most of the European countries' legislation – as potential actors of international cooperation.

The beginning of this trend has been, first of all, recognised formally in the twinning between cities; This form of co-operation has been, and still is, very important for increasing the direct exchange and contacts between citizens and their associations inside Europe. With the fall of the Berlin Wall, the twinning has been made possible with East European countries as well. Nevertheless, beside the institutional and registered "twinning", this co-operation has also taken place at the informal level, with specific activities in social and economic field. Local authorities started developing their own initiatives in international co-operation while transferring their know-how in the best field of expertise. New provisions that have been included regarding the international decentralised co-operation in Europe have ratified an on-going process and thus saw their *de facto* implementation. Formal recognition of a pro-active approach of the local authorities is still slow since it is oriented towards the decentralisation of competencies traditionally belonging to higher tiers of government (such as the foreign policy). However, an evident progress in this respect has been confirmed and accentuated over the past years, particularly during the mid of nineties.

Beside the legal issues and the possibility for the local authorities to be involved in the international matters, it is a matter of fact that the international relations became increasingly interesting for them as a segment of "national" policies and priorities. This process was taking place simultaneously with a general opening of the communities to global issues. Today, the citizen might be affected – directly or indirectly – by events taking place anywhere in the world. This concern of being a part of "global" community and, consequently, how the people representing us (the political representatives) are addressing these global issues, is one of the key element for them to be voted. Interest for the international developments may be considered as moral (peace, balanced development, human rights) and economic (stability, development, opening of new markets). In both cases, globalisation is going deep into the general culture of every citizen in Europe. Therefore, local authorities across Europe are not only invited but also inevitably requested to be active in international matters. Building up the European Union and its identity, also through the direct involvement in international co-operation, is a fruitful democratic achievement for all the Europeans. In this way an open-minded approach is being ensured, helping citizens understand better the existing diversities and increase the level of acceptance of different cultures so as to foster the co-operation and exchange programs. The rigid concept of sovereignty has been overcome thus bringing forward active participation of local authorities, and also similar process has taken place in South and Eastern Europe. Eventually, it is worth to be underlined that the "decentralised co-operation" is also a tangible effect of decentralisation of the competences of the State.

Without doubts, the war in former-Yugoslavia represented a watershed as far as the international cooperation of local authorities in Europe is concerned. Direct involvement, geographical proximity, historic background, left none of us indifferent to the tragedy. The war was in the heart of Europe and the consequences were measurable in our everyday life.

On the other hand, the war conflict to a large extent impeded and limited the scope of partnerships, which on the contrary, became extremely numerous in the former USSR block, after the fall of the Berlin wall. The partnership between towns and regions with countries like Bulgaria and Hungary have now been developed for more than ten years. South Eastern Europe, in this sense, has lost many years of effective and fruitful co-operation.

Local authorities in Europe, which were active during the war for humanitarian reasons were thousands and thousands. Going over the political barriers and any kind of historical

relationship, the efforts made from 1991 to 1996 were of paramount importance. In most of the cases, the humanitarian aid provided by the local authorities was in many cases more efficient and consistent than the one given by the “official” international help.

This action in emergency laid down the basis for a long lasting relationship between communities in Europe and local authorities from South and Eastern Europe. The friendship, which has been developed during this period, in most of the cases, was the ground for the establishment of more institutionalised relationship. Moreover, this also gave an opportunity to the local authorities to test their capacities – maybe for the first time – to be active at the international level. In many cases, that was the first attempt (by the local authorities) embrace the initiatives which were usually only implemented by NGO groups. They also adapted their provisions at the local level and established new bodies specifically in charge for “international issues” (consultative boards, committees,...). In these first steps, they became aware the needs of their internal structure to be developed for this kind of co-operation (officers speaking foreign languages, capacities to interact with other structures and local authorities abroad).

Throughout their solidarity aimed activities, which lasted during the whole period of the war, the local authorities joined the networks of partners (at the national or international level), which could support their action, co-ordinate the activity and provide them with assistance and further resources.

A number of local authorities were already “internationally oriented” and for some of them, it has become a priority. Most of the small and medium local self-governments were in fact very active during emergency phase. They were able to use substantially their contacts held before the war for the development of effective and complex programmes. In some cases, however, the quick institutional changes had also created some difficulties in the communication and relations.

The governments (like in Italy, France, Germany and UK) have provided specific help and programme to support the local authorities in their work of international co-operation. This was proven as a useful tool for supporting their actions. However, after the end of the funding, few of these partnerships managed to survive and to be self-sustainable.

A new phase for the international role of the local authorities at the European level

The role of local authorities as well as NGOs as actors of international cooperation has been also confirmed by the European Union thanks to the different financial tools that they put at their disposal. Inside the EU and with the Third Countries, in many cases, the local authorities have the opportunity to apply for activities planned in various fields ranging from economy to culture. There is, *de facto*, a confirmation of their potential role of being active in international cooperation. Furthermore, the most significant programmes – such as the activities aimed at fighting against the unemployment, the structural funds, etc – are now distributed by the government to the regions and other decentralised authorities. That was meaningful in terms of awareness of their position and function in having a to say a word – and to be active- in foreign policy of their State.

Of course, the participation of local authorities in complex EU tenders improved substantially their capacity of being involved in international matters. The management of such programmes, for small local authorities, needs usually the support of external organisations. For the larger local authorities, offices for international relations – even for EU relations – have been established. This new skills had – in this last decade – an evident positive impact for the development of partnership, and in our case, resulted in more frequent contacts with the SEE.

It is also to be underlined that unfortunately, the European Union does not support financially the process of twinning of the European Cities with cities in SEE. They are still excluded from the beneficiaries.

In some cases, the resources that the local authorities received from the EU are very relevant. That also opened the door for new opportunities of co-operation.

For the small local authorities, since they need the support of agencies or other organisations for their programmes, they managed to be in touch with potential networks that further on have been able to support their partnership.

The role of NGOs

NGOs and organised groups of citizens have played, and still do, a fundamental role in bringing the local authorities into the partnership with the local authorities in SEE. For almost all the cases of cooperation registered, the first input arrived to the local authority through the local NGO-s which were in direct contact with citizens of SEE. The role of the NGO-s is not only important at the beginning but also throughout the implementation and follow-up activities. During the implementation, they could provide the necessary skills and competences that sometimes are missing in the local authorities. A strong support of civil society is important from both sides since it gives a particularly involved and “motivated” input to the action. The NGOs are also capable of ensuring the continuity to programmes. In fact, the local authorities are, by definition and mandate, oriented to carry out many obligations and the international cooperation is far away to be their “core business”.

From the SEE as well, the contact with organised group of citizens is fundamental for giving a continuity to the process of co-operation.

Nevertheless, it is of fundamental importance that the local authority could provide support both politically and in other practical ways the process of co-operation among NGOs. The partnership with the SEE authorities and communities has in fact been a real very effective pilot project for a co-operation, not only between authorities but also a first connection between local representatives at the political level and NGOs.

The NGOs have the role to keep such an awareness at a high level as well as to persist in the quality contents and objectives of the action planned in the partnership. The dynamics which are characteristic for the civil society and its associations is different from the local authority.

The role the NGOs and the civil society actors, in general, have been strengthened by globalisation in Europe over the last years, particularly in terms of requests for participative democracy that would respect human rights.

Acting during the war

Without any doubts, the war in the Balkans influenced the quality and the quantity of the partnership of cities and towns active in SEE.

Following the public opinion and the attention of the media, the actors of the decentralised international co-operation have been mobilised for giving humanitarian and help and emergency support. The number of activities – especially in areas like Bosnia and Herzegovina – have been higher than any other situation in the world. In addition to the action of the institutional actors, the NGOs have been also extremely present (from the big international NGOs to the simple groups of citizens or CBOs). International inter-governmental organisations have also been actively involved : the UN at the beginning – with the different agencies, UNHCR, UNDP and others -, the EU – ECMM and then the civil structure in BiH, the OHR, then the OSCE which is now leading – from an international point of view - the process of democratisation in the Balkans, the Council of Europe with the technical assistance and the programme of the LDAs.

The contribution during the war was at the same time difficult and easy. Difficult because of the factual, extreme problems in the co-operation (conflict, impossibility of communication, extreme needs). It was easy because the public opinion was extremely interested in providing humanitarian aid and support. The message was clear and immediate. The complexity of the situation was summarised in the only message of “helping the victims of a conflict”. In particular, many activities started for the children and other very disadvantage people of war (refugees, displaced people, elderly people, widows).

The local authorities already involved in SEE, before the war, had the opportunity to be in touch immediately with their partners and to be active. The NGOs were supportive to attract the local authorities into this “process of solidarity”. The programmes have been also complex and relevant from a quantitative point of view. Thousands of actions took place within specific programmes and intended for a wide range of target groups.

On the hand, the complexity which is a characteristic of South Eastern Europe and different throughout difficult phases of the war, created problems to the cities and other local authorities involved. After the “easy” message of solidarity, when the matter of “understanding” the conflict started to be relevant for the continuity of the activity, and led to a watershed for a future co-operation among the cities. To the cities and local authorities involved, a choice was presented to supporting one side rather than another. A choice difficult to be made since the complexity of the war did not give, in some cases, a clear picture of “guilty/victims”. After a while and due to the fact that the war-conflict had been intensified, the whole idea of South Eastern Europe as the “Balkans”, was gradually perceived as “chaos”, “disintegration”, “understandable situation”, “wild violence”. Even for the NGOs supporting the solidarity process, it was difficult to keep the attention high – at the end of the war – despite the still urgent needs for humanitarian relief, because this “level of emergency” can persist for a certain period of time, but not forever. At the end, among the actors of the process of partnership between Europe and SEE a common approach was adopted : to wait until the fightings stop and only then to carry on with the co-operation. The Dayton Agreement was signed when this perception was increasingly widespread in the public opinion in Europe.

Without any doubt, the conflict in Serbia and in Kosovo developed the same process of interest of the local authorities in terms of possibility of participation. Nevertheless, after a short period of interest and maybe a further difficulty of intervention, the period of “high” interest in the field of solidarity was shorter.

After the war, the long lasting commitment

We could say that the more substantial and long lasting contribution of local authorities involved in partnership with their counterparts in SEE started after the conflict. “Co-operation for rebuilding” was the main guideline for this support. In most of the cases, the partnership between local communities were not tackling the reconstruction of infrastructures. However, there are also important examples of huge quantity of funds for infrastructural supplies. The rebuilding process is a complex and articulated action, which brings together different segments of the community, which were not used to live together any more and had enormous difficulties to share the same vision of the future. We are speaking about displaced people, refugees, coming from the rural areas into the cities. The trust towards the official representatives (the political level) collapsed and the entire social tissue was jeopardised.

In this framework, together with local authorities and NGOs, it is necessary to start from the grass-root level, with the pilot programmes capable of involving a large part of the community. The long process of building up a democratic system, lived and strengthened in the local authorities in Europe in those year after the Second World War, are the best tool for promoting such a long lasting programme in South Eastern Europe.

With the partnership, it is then possible for local authorities involved to “rebuild” together with their contact in SEE, new relationships with the community : education, youth, media, institutional level. They started with exchanges of best practices and opening of these

countries towards Europe – which were facilitated by existing connections with the European partners. The involvement of citizens from Europe in this delicate process of democratisation in SEE was also fundamental for improving their understanding of the different mechanisms of democracy and civil participation.

The partnership after the war lost part of the characteristic of “emergency intervention” but gained a lot in general contribution for a general, deep and long lasting development which includes the participation of local authorities and civil society. The intervention of local authorities and communities gave a substantial boost to the creation of a balanced and all-inclusive process of development at the local level while strengthening the local stakeholders.

Network support

The development and the success of partnership among towns and regions are based, in most of the cases, on the work of networks and other institutions which enable the realisation of the necessary support. The networks (institutions or NGOs) offer a fundamental help to the activity of these local authorities.

The activities of the network are:

- To keep the contact with both sides of the partnership
- To provide inside information from the field
- To provide competencies in fundraising
- To support the project management
- To give a follow-up to the initiative
- To keep alive the awareness on the issue
- To identify resources (financial and human)

The international decentralised co-operation offered an important opportunity to test the capacity of networking organisations (the CPLRE itself, the ALDA, the associations of the local authorities, national and international NGOs). Of course, the support of networks is crucial for the small and medium size cities. Nevertheless, even the big cities which have their own internal competencies are trying to develop contacts for the improvement of their activities through the networks mentioned above.

The partnership in South and Eastern Europe have been the opportunity to develop the concept of international co-operation for local authorities, thanks to the support of networks and supporting agencies. The decreased interest of the local authorities, after the war, is now compensated by the established capacities of the networking system capable of developing and supporting the programmes.

➤ **Methodology for the partnerships**

The partnership included in the framework of what could be defined “international decentralised co-operation” can be developed through two main lines of action :

- Territorial, involving all the actors of the communities concerned on a geographic base
- Thematic, focused on a specific issue and which is collecting, for this issue, partnership and support

Partnership is a co-operation between local authorities and their communities for the social, political and economical development of both the actors.

Partnership City to City

The partnership which involves only the local authorities – without any support from NGOs – are very rare. Nevertheless, it can exist in the cases when big cities in Europe and in the

Balkans are involved, usually the capitals. Sarajevo, Zagreb and Belgrade have been contacted directly by the biggest towns in Europe (Barcelona, Rome, Paris, Berlin Vienna, etc).

This kind of partnership have brought usually large-scale funds from the European Union in the region and are dealing also with relevant support provided for infrastructure. They imply, it goes without saying, a particular attention of the political level for these issues as well as a relevant experience and internal capacities.

Those contacts "city to city" had a relevant impact in the local community in SEE if they lasted throughout the years. Being purely linked to the institutional level, it often happens that they are suspended if the local administration has been changed by the elections.

Sometimes, the contacts at the institutional level were also the result of previous formal twinning. From the point of visibility, the commitment of the towns and local authorities – which is very important also for justifying such an international involvement of the local authority– can have a lot of impact in the media.

Cities and NGOs

The co-operation of cities and NGOs represents the most common way of being involved in the SEE regions. The local authorities are supported by a local NGO which gives continuity and constant support to their official commitment. On the other hand, the NGO whose work is recognised by the local authority, can start an important process of being actively involved in the policy of the leaders of their community. It is a good chance of being included in a virtuous circle, which makes the community richer and more participative.

The participation of NGOs might also assure a certain continuity for the work if the local authority changes its political majority and maybe does not consider the partnership as a new priority the involvement.

NGOs and NGOs

Because of the difficulty of addressing the situation in SEE, which is consistently changing, some important partnerships have been established among NGOs on both side. That also brought vitality and activity to the NGO sector, which is one of the pillars of the democratisation process in the region.

The NGOs (mostly composed of intellectuals, representatives of media and young people) represented in some cases the only reliable source of information for a good and long lasting partnership.

Una tantum activity

Most of the partnerships, which have been established between European towns and regions and local authorities in South and Eastern Europe are developed on a medium and long term basis. Nevertheless, in some cases, the co-operation was expressed in one single action and was not able to be repeated further on. The action responds to a single need or appeal for the community in SEE and it might concern big investment or smaller activities (exchanges of experience, official contact,...)

It has to be underlined that, sometimes, the partnership was interrupted for reasons related to the political situation (elections or changes in the government) or for other critical moments.

The *una tantum* activities have been also made possible by the related *una tantum* funds that the local authorities were relying on for their commitment. In fact, the national governments have identified specific budget lines for the support of such a co-operation which lasted just for a very short time. The local authorities involved in this process could rarely count and identify their own resources for keeping on going.

Long term programmes

Partnerships among towns and regions, based on official relations and institutional contacts tend to be long term relations, even if sometimes this aim is not reached. The activities related to the partnership represent a step of a shared programme and co-operation. The projects involve the communities of the two partners. They have the objective to bring about, in the medium and long term, the social and economic development of the area in SEE and to raise the attention and the awareness of the citizens in Europe regarding these issues.

The long term programmes with the involvement of civil society and institutional authorities are the most effective but also the most difficult to be implemented. It is very difficult, indeed, to keep high the attention of the authorities for a long time, especially when the time of the emergency has passed.

In the local authorities, in addition, it is hard to be committed in the long term due to the annual budget. Furthermore, this difficulty is also linked to the change of the political level of the authority at each mandate. If the decision regarding the co-operation is shared by majority and opposition, it is then easier to make the programme continue after the change of the majority. Again, the support of civil society could be fundamental since it can keep alive the connection and the partnership for a long period of time.

For some cities and regions in Europe, the co-operation with SEE is now a real characteristic of their international activity. They have been extremely committed in those last 10 years and their success has proved to be recognised by the international community but also by the citizens, at the local level.

In any case, the experience shows that the partnership – even strongly established and institutionalised – between local and regional authorities, if it is not supported by a wide range of representatives of civil society, has some difficulty to survive for many years. This may happen if the local authority is connected to any network which supports them in the partnership or if a member of the city board, or even a senior officer, might be particularly committed. But, it is, then, related to a personnel question, which can really matter for a long term engagement.

The partnership of local authorities with SEE can be, might be, a political choice of the whole city (or region) government. Nevertheless, if the project receives a confirmation and a support from the technical officers and the civil servants – through the interest of a group of people or even a senior officer – the programme might be then better supported. Without this interest and capacity of the civil servants, the contacts and support might be shorter and then it could get to an end very quickly. The role of the officers in the city hall is fundamental, in particular if we try to confirm a long term commitment. They must be “open minded” and prepared for such a co-operation. The possibility of the partnership, at the end of the day, can depend also from these very specific skills.

Participatory planning process

As far as the partnership among local authorities and NGOs is concerned, for the methodology of their actions, a special feature has to be underlined. By definition, the decentralised international co-operation is based on the participation of all the different actors in the phases of the action. Therefore, the two parts of the partnership should be involved in a process of evaluation of the needs and identification of the resources, from both side. The basis of this partnership is the exchange among the parties in the co-operation.

The balanced co-operation, the understanding that it is not a one-way approach, is fundamental for a better achievement of the programme. The community, from Europe, involved in the programme must be aware that they have a general benefit out of this action (not only a political visibility for the current political representatives). The result for them is a

deeper understanding of the democratic processes, a revitalisation of their civil society through practical action and co-operation, the growth of the whole community by being involved in actions for the protection of human rights and democracy. The programme of co-operation, without doubts, are focusing on the development from both side, with a special attention to the SEE. Nevertheless, the development – and this is the central aspect of the partnership among towns and regions – is understood in a wider sense, which includes a general welfare of the community: education, environment, human rights, employment and other issues related to economy. The partnership presented in this document have a common objective to promote a shared and long lasting development in the community. The economical animation is also part of these partnership (exchanges of business people and possible investments). It is important – and it is most of the cases – that this process could be involved in a larger vision, which put the basis for the managerial education of the citizens in SEE who will be able to benefit from the process. This virtuous process should interest all the segments of a community (including the “people without rights”, refugees and minorities).

The partnership among local authorities and NGOs, here described as concrete actions of international decentralised co-operation. They give an added value to the programme of co-operation *tout court* because of their involvement of all the stakeholders and because they promote the participatory planning process. All the key persons at the local level should be involved in the decisions – thank to the attention and participation of European towns this is possible – regarding the programmes established in their community.

If the activities of the co-operation are genuinely shared, the results will be applicable and effective. It will not be just coming down from the top and responding to the objectives “of the donors” but it will be the meeting point between the expression of the needs and resources of the local community in SEE and the possible resources from the other local authorities, from Europe.

In this case – and this is the substance of the partnership among towns and regions, with NGOs, the international decentralised co-operation – the process is maybe more important than the programme itself. The co-operation among cities and the participation is – on a long term – as much important as the support for the rebuilding of a single house, for instance.

Transborder co-operation

Transborder co-operation approach has been confirmed by the Stability Pact as one of the main tool for the stabilisation of the region.

The capacity of implementing large regional programmes depends from the resources and activities of the local authorities. Usually, for a single city or region, it seems rather difficult to operate on a wide scale by taking into consideration in their programmes, different regions and countries.

The role of transborder co-operation is specifically appropriate for the network of local authorities (like the Local Democracy Agencies, East West Institute or other networks of this kind) which are able to co-ordinate the different field actors.

Trans-border co-operation activity, for those networks, is one of the most powerful methodology of work for having a strong, long lasting and measurable result in the community. This approach can deal with refugees, economic sector, transfer of know-how, environment and other matters. The co-operation between regions and towns, on a trans-frontier base, is particularly useful and successful in the cases when the national authorities are stuck, in their actions, by laws and difficult international mediations. The local authorities are then more open and very practically involved in finding out solutions.

In SEE, trans-border co-operation including local authorities, has been particularly developed in :

- a) Skopje ("the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia") / Sofia (Bulgaria) / Nis (FRY) – promoted by East West Institute, in cooperation of the LDA in Central and Southern Serbia
- b) Tuzla (BiH) / Pec (Hungary) / Osijek (Croatia) / Novi Sad and Subotica (FRY) – programme for a Euroregion, supported also by the LDAs in Osijek and Tuzla
- c) Niksic (Montenegro) and Dubrovnik (Croatia) – Confidence Building Measures project of the LDA in Montenegro
- d) Istria/Verteneglio / Slovenia /Italy – programme of Interreg/EU , with the support of the LDA in Verteneglio/Brtonigla
- e) Ohrid ("the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia") / Albania – project starting with the support of EWI
- f) Prijedor (BiH) and Sisak (Croatia) – starting the contacts with the support of the LDA in Prijedor and Sisak

National and international programmes

South and Eastern Europe has received in the past huge international funding in those last 10 years. Sometimes, with some evident mistakes, mainly due to the misunderstanding of the local situations and to the lack – or unwillingness – of communication at the local level. Each donor or Agency has worked in its own field without paying, often, too much attention to what was done nearby. In some cases, especially in Bosnia, the international community was so strongly involved that the local life was basically substituted by this "international" presence. The whole economy – what was left from the war – was completely distorted by the international funds (salaries, grants, ...) that it did not give the opportunity for the establishment of a local and grass-root development. The fear now is that, once the international community withdraws, for the local citizens, everything will have to be started again. Such a strong presence created, without doubts, a sense of non - genuine "addiction to the grants" and often prevented from starting up their local development.

In this framework, the partnership among towns and NGOs and their methodological approach – of participation at the local level – gave a new vision to the presence of the international community. The projects were managed at the local level with a strong connection with the local community. As explained above, the conditions for the success of this co-operation was the participation. The funds at the disposal were not – even if in some cases they could have been consistent – as large as the international funding. The activities are precisely determined and their objective is the local development, chosen and defined by the local community. In the medium and long term, the long lasting achievements, compared to the big international programme, could be much more relevant.

On the other hand, the international funds and the commitment of government of member states have also contributed strongly – with funds and with a political backing – to the actions of international decentralised co-operation. They offered the cities and regions the opportunity of realising their programme but following a decentralised methodology.

The Council of Europe has supported in these last years the network of the Local Democracy Agencies, which are a fundamental support of the co-operation towards SEE of hundreds of towns and regions in Europe. Through the Stability Pact and the coordination of the Council of Europe, the LDAs have strengthened their actions and the partnership with the towns and other local actors, thanks to the support of the Swiss Agency for development as well as the Irish Government. Those funds gave the opportunity to realise actions for the local development in the whole network of the Agencies.

The European Union itself is including in its policies of international co-operation new guidelines, which are supporting the process of contact between cities and NGOs. It actually put in evidence a) the necessity of including the different level of the community in the actions, at the different level b) on the process of realisation of the activities (which might be participative and shared) and not just focusing on the final results c) it prefers the

decentralised implementation of the programmes d) it aims at strengthening the capacities of the institutions.

The European Union supported in those last years many programme for supporting the international decentralised co-operation, through the LDAs but also through the specific support of towns and regions in Europe.

National programmes – from the EU members States – also supported the commitment of the local authorities such as, for example, a) the programme City to City of the Italian Government b) the support for the co-operation offered by the French Government (*Développement Local Balkans*), the support assured also to the German local authorities by the federal government and the special programme co-ordinated by LGIB in the UK.

➤ **Issues**

Institution building (local authorities, NGOs)

The cooperation between local authorities has been very active in institution building process. It is still one of the best contribution of the decentralised international co-operation.

The institutional building concerns the development of the capacities and skills of the local authorities and NGOS, actors of the partnership: how they are managed, how they are organised for reaching their objectives, etc.

The activities for institution building carried out in different partnership are :

- a) exchanges of good practices (in the different fields of competence of the local administration or the relative NGO)
- b) training and training of trainers
- c) analysis and comparative studies
- d) internship offered by the members of the partnership
- e) development of pilot cases
- f) technical assistance for the development of case studies

Environment

Because of the very difficult situation regarding environment in South Eastern Europe (very badly affected by the heavy industry in some areas and by the aftermath of the war, by the total absence of environmental policies), it was soon clear that the issue of the environment protection would have been one of the most important question of the co-operation of the local authorities.

The cities and regions brought to the SEE their experience in terms of

- a) waste management
- b) water resources preservation
- c) public services in the field of environment protection
- d) raising public awareness and education for environment protection

Co-operation between cities and regions and the involvement of NGOs, have been particularly successful in some areas where it lead to concrete projects with an effective change in the environmental situation in the area.

The pollution of the rivers, in particular the Danube and the Sava, are now under consideration also in transborder co-operation programmes.

The Government of Germany is also supporting local NGOs which are able to work with local authorities for the support of programme dealing with the protection of environment.

Culture

The partnership is also very much an exchange of cultures between the communities in SEE and the other partners. The cultural exchanges are an essential part of the programmes since they are also the most effective way to involve citizens in the international commitment of their local authorities. We can here, for example, list the exchanges of exhibitions, productions of books and videos. These means have been an important tool for the dissemination and the information among the citizens from Europe about the situation in South Eastern Europe. On the other hand, that also gave the opportunity to the partner from the South to express the difficulties but also opportunities of their situation through their culture and traditions.

The cultural exchanges offered an incredible richness for both side of the partnership. That also gave another understanding of the differences and richness of the parts which compose Europe.

Education

In the decentralised international co-operation, based on the work of the local authorities, with no doubt education played an important part. It was implemented through exchange of good practices, and exchange programmes for students, internships offered and studies at the higher level and the universities. Education is one of the means of promotion of the local development and it will be the basis for a real long lasting and self sustainable welfare in the region. Schools at all levels, on both sides of the partnership, have been often involved.

Youth/children

To the role of youth and children has drawn much of attention, during the period of the war as well as after the conflict.

The local authorities supported youth centres where young people could organise activities and have a place where to meet and rebuild their relationship. Those youth centres have also been resource centres for the whole community which was – after many years of isolation – eager of new information.

Youth and children have been the focus of many programmes of international decentralised co-operation. Thanks to these activities, it was possible to make the society more sensible and active in the democratisation process. They have been involved in the decision making process at the local by a better information about their rights and duties. A particular attention has been dedicated, and it is still the case, to the possibility for them to establish city council of young people in their community.

SEE is now affected by a terrible problem which is the “brain drain”. Most of them are young people. Through the work at the local level, by giving them the word, by offering them the capacity and the role to count in their community, it is possible to offer the young people a sense of hope and future in their community in a way that they don’t have to leave for getting a better life.

Media

The support to the local media and independent expression needs a separated item in this presentation. A big support from the local authorities and other actors of the decentralised co-operation from abroad has been given to the small and medium media, which tried to offer an alternative source of information. Radios, TVs and newspaper have been the focus of many programmes. The journalists and free lance contributors had the opportunity to be trained by colleagues, to receive funds or to be hosted for internship in Europe.

Economic revitalisation

The activities of partnerships in many cases have been a reliable support for the economic development in SEE. This is, of course, very much expected from the local communities. The European partners offered know-how (with training and other technical support related to the economic development). They supported the direct contact between businesses. The institutional contacts between the local authorities brought also further co-operations like, for instance, the twinning between professional associations (industries, craftsmen, agricultural sector). They also developed the formal and substantial exchanges of information between the chambers of commerce and other development agencies.

The economic animation requires a lot of competences and a qualified support which could hardly be provided directly by the local authorities themselves that can, on the other hand, give the institutional backing for the initiative. This activity is usually taken over by professionals which are giving a follow-up to the first contacts.

In that sense, new offices, agencies for development, business centres have been established for giving a specific and professional help to these programmes and to be collectors of information, funds and expertise.

That obviously goes also to the benefit of both side which are working for a development of economic exchanges. The decentralised international co-operation, with the support of local authorities, support these forms of economic exchanges which should not fall into the kind of international help which benefit more the donors than the so called "beneficiaries".

Infrastructures

The infrastructure has rarely been the kind of help that the local authorities could have provided to the counterpart in SEE. Because of the cost of the activity and because – in most of the cases – these initiatives are strictly in competences of the national level which should be co-ordinating the whole issue. The funds for these programmes (reconstruction of houses, roads, pipelines, communication systems, etc.) have been and are negotiated at the tables of the conferences of the Stability Pact, World Bank and other important private economic groups.

Nevertheless, the local authorities have been active in offering a better framework, a basis for a more effective programme for infrastructure decided at the national level. The European local authorities involved in partnerships have also been very good "ambassadors" for lobbying infrastructural programmes in the governments and other agencies.

In some cases, the local authorities and their partnership made aware the citizens of their real needs and gave them the opportunity to be more selective and determined in supporting one project rather than an another. Furthermore, the institution building process and the enhancement of the civil society of certain areas have been fundamental for the orientation of the biggest donors for choosing the area where they would have been assured of a better success of the programme. This is the case of Prijedor, for instance, where the success of the local community to carry out the programme of return made a substantial difference in terms of investment – from the donor's side – for the reconstruction of houses and other kind of

investments. In negative terms, an area where the democratisation process, the participation of citizens and human rights issues are constantly creating a problem are, more and more, not taken into consideration with difficulties for large investments. The reason for that is not just a punishment but rather a purely economic option which considers that relevant infrastructural programmes must be supported and endorsed by a real and participative community which will be able to multiply the effect of the investment in terms of local development and welfare.

Institutional contacts

The formal and institutional contacts between the local authorities from SEE and Europe remains a fundamental and important part of the partnership. The simple existence of a political will is important for the communities of the two cities or regions. One of the problems for the development in the Balkans is, without any doubts, the lack of trust that the citizens have towards their elected representatives. After the collapse of the whole system – political and economic – during the war, it is difficult to expect the trust to be recovered. The institutional contacts, the international recognition – especially at the local level – of this political level is important and gives a new sense of normality.

The declared political goodwill is also important for the European partners which engage their community in a difficult exercise of democracy and protection of human rights.

Humanitarian assistance

Initial activities, and for many years, which were carried out by the partnerships were humanitarian assistance (first aid support, food, cloths, medicine, etc). On this basis, as explained above, started many long lasting co-operation between local authorities. The target groups have been refugees, displaced people, children, victims of the war. For years, a constant flow of humanitarian relief was arriving in South and Eastern Europe.

Nowadays, the emergency of refugees and displaced people is not any more at the front stage even though, extreme difficult conditions are still existing. Thousands of people are still living in collective accommodation and their legal and economic situation is getting worse and worse. In fact, these “citizens without rights” have enormous difficulties on their way to return home, partly because they are not well accepted partly because, after 10 years, they have lost really any contact with their home town and region. Moreover, they have a difficult situation in the region where they are currently living since they struggle to find a job and to be fully accepted by the community.

The partnership programmes – especially the NGOs – have realised many activities for supporting this long staying “abroad” of the refugees, working with UNHCR, while organising centres, information sessions, supporting the possibilities of return, promoting a discussion with the local authorities concerning their status, sometimes assisting them directly with concrete help.

Strictly connected to this kind of situation, the local authorities involved in the partnership have an opportunity to get in touch with another dark side of the issue which is, in Western Europe, known as “illegal immigration”. Many of those immigrants are coming from, or are “in transit “ in South Eastern Europe. This phenomenon is also, and above all, part of national policies, which are usually tackled by Ministries. It is often understood and dealt as a problem of internal insecurity and therefore it goes in the hands of the Interiors. The local authorities involved try to give – if they can – concrete, even for small and specific group of people including the area of their partnership - answers to this problem. More and more, for instance, the Italian cities of the Adriatic are getting directly in touch with cities from Albania and Montenegro. This international exchanges but at the local level are able to multiply the synergies of the actions for preventing the illegal immigration into Europe.

➤ **Difficulties and opportunities**

The co-operation of cities and regions in South Eastern Europe is still, today, a great opportunity for implementing innovative programmes of institution building and local development with the support of the civil society.

The entire region is now leaving behind the phase of emergency and it is accepting a long term commitment. In this particular area of the world, it is possible to count on the activity realised in this last decade by the local authorities across Europe which can be considered the main actors of local development based on the participatory process for the whole community.

There is, in this area, a concrete and effective tradition of co-operation of local authorities and civil society which can really be of support for a balanced economic and social development of the area.

The partnership process and the decentralised co-operation in the region is also following and supporting the process of integration in the European Union, which is now of high interest of the SEE States. Some of them have already started a agreement for stabilisation and accession. Our commitment in this region must be related also to this long term goal which can also provide a legal framework and set priorities for the future actions.

Local authorities and civil society, which are actors in these partnerships have the opportunity to work for a balanced and “genuine” economic and social development of the area, which is the door next door of the United European Union. This means that, together, at the very local level and for concrete actions, it will be possible to face – or solve - questions which are of common concern (immigration/emigration, economical exchanges, environmental issues, political stability in the area, intercultural dialogue, etc.)

Further more, for the partners from Europe and their community, the work in the Balkans remains a good occasion to be involved in an innovative process of building up a new democratic system. Being part of the process gives us the opportunity to be also more active and aware of our own struggle. The bigger is the effort made in understanding the problems of the emerging democracies and development in SEE, the more we understand our own processes.

South and Eastern Europe is, at the end of the day, a part of Europe which needs to catch up the rest of the continent and take over the role and the position that they had almost been ready to get, before the beginning of the tragic event in the '90s. The same support which is now given to the candidate countries for the EU – in order to bring them closer to the standards for the accession to the EU – can be already started by the partners of those direct contacts, the partnership, at the local level. The decentralised co-operation will pave the way and facilitate the work for this future accession process.

On the other hand, basic principles (democracy, human rights, state of law) and this endeavour must be shared by the counterpart in the local authorities in South Eastern Europe. The condition for getting good results from this co-operation and partnership depends from the real good faith of the actors we are in touch with, local authorities and civil society. The good faith, the real commitment of local authorities and civil society in SEE must be assessed, and then supported, by the international community. It must then be given a response to the local needs rather than to offer an opportunity to international investments which will have as beneficiaries only the donors themselves. The participatory planning process, the involvement of the community, taking into consideration the resources at the local level, will be the only way to have long lasting results. This is a difficult and complex task that sometimes, in the short and medium term, is hardly giving the measurable results that the donors' agencies are requesting in their *questionnaires*.

A current problem of the partnerships and the international decentralised co-operation is also in the evaluation system of the work which has been realised thanks to this methodology. In

fact, it is hard to establish a good and relevant matrix of evaluation which would be suitable for giving a correct understanding of the added value which is offered by this kind of co-operation. The results are measurable in the medium and long term and it might be difficult to connect the outcome to the initial inputs or steps.

A real effort should be made in the cultural field. The principle to be kept in mind is “to learn how to fish instead of giving the fish”. The value of this approach must be deeply understood and shared by the community we are working with. Often, they are used to the “donations” and not to “partnership for development”. The first ones are definitively easy to manage. The last ones request efforts and a vision.

The partnership requests a real participation of the whole community as well as a full understanding of the approach. Sometimes, this is blocked by the political/short term questions, which bases the strategy for the development on the length of the political mandate. The means used for implementing those strategies are also superficial and without no will to have an effective impact on the community. These results might be also jeopardized by problems often identified in the management of public resources in South Eastern Europe such as high and unjustified bureaucracy, corruption, personal interests.

From the part of international community, there is also, without any doubts, a difficulty to keep the interest on a long term basis when the public opinion is oriented towards other fronts (Middle East, today, Afghanistan, yesterday). This is obvious in South Eastern Europe, where the efforts are above all concentrated toward Serbia, Kosovo and “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” and where this a lower commitment in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

This is also the challenge of the supporting networks of the decentralised co-operation to support local authorities to find the effective ways to give a follow-up to their commitment.

➤ **Trends**

All the countries in South Eastern Europe are now very close to be full members of the Council of Europe sharing the same principle of democracy, rule of law and respect for human rights and minorities. That offers a common background and legal framework.

In the near future, also thanks to the support of the European partners involved in the international decentralised co-operation, the States of the region will follow the process of accession to the European Union. The initiative “Europe Beyond the Borders”, held in Sarajevo on the 5/6th of April 2002 confirmed the necessity and the role to launch this process.. The president of the European Commission, Romano Prodi, in many occasions, confirmed his conviction that this is the way to go for stability in the region and for turning eventually a new page.

It is highly time to think of a mature and therefore complex co-operation which implies a two way dialogue, a multilevel approach where all the partners (from Western and from South Eastern Europe, local authorities and NGOs) are actively involved in the programmes. Planning and implementing must take into consideration the local resources and the objectives of both of the actors.

The co-operation will also be characterised by a progressive withdrawal of the “official” “international community” (UN agencies, OSCE, military troops) and their connected grants. The actors of the partnerships will then need to be more innovative for bringing to the stage their own resources rather than being in a more passive position of beneficiaries. Rather than a disadvantage, this could be understood as a good starting point for creating synergies and means of co-operation.

A special focus, after the solidarity action, will be given to the economic and social welfare, which includes job creation, small and medium enterprises, banking system, social institutions, educational system.

II PART – Per country

Italy

Italy has been one of the main actors in the decentralised international co-operation in SEE for geographical proximity as well as for historical reasons. Yet during the war, the wave of solidarity has been very important and mobilized local authorities and NGOs.

De facto, in this country, the partnership of local authorities imposed itself as an important tool for international co-operation in SEE. The legislation which gives a certain flexibility to the Italian local authorities for concluding agreements and partnerships at the international level has also been a key issue in this process. The quality and the quantity of actions which have been carried out can be clearly understood from the partnership list which is annexed to this document.

All the fields of activities and methodologies have been used and tested for the partnerships. In those last years, the Italian local authorities could count on strong and supportive NGOs and other networks which supported their work. Obviously, Italy has a special interest in the development of SEE and in its stabilisation. The existing economical exchanges and contacts have been very a solid basis of co-operation.

The extensive activity of partnership among the local authorities in Italy and in SEE paved the path for a following legislative evolution in the Italian laws related to international co-operation.

We can here list a few of innovative programmes which are the examples of this new positive trend which underlines the growth of the role of the decentralised co-operation even in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs :

- a) the agreement among the Friuli Venezia Giulia and the Ministry for the development of a large programme of international decentralised co-operation for the support of the local development in Easter Slavonia
- b) the programme City to City which is supporting the co-operation of Italian towns and a number of cities in Serbia focusing on the basis of local development. This programme receives the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and is co-ordinated by UNOPS
- c) a review of the partnership of Italian cities and the Balkans realised called “CREB” realised in co-operation with the Association of Italian Cities, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the city of Venice (www.creb.it)
- d) a large programme of support for NGOs financially backed by the General Directorate for the cooperation to the development (DGCS)

As far as the networks supporting the partnerships of NGOs and towns in Italy with South Eastern Europe, an important role is played by innovative instruments provided by l'OSSERVATORIO PER I BALCANI (www.osservatoriobalceni.org) of Trento. It is supervising the commitment of 140 Italian NGOS working in the Balkan area. The *Osservatorio* is also a centre of research, analysis and promotion. In the network which is supporting the activity in area,

for the NGOs' side, a large and relevant work has been realised by the Italian Consortium of Solidarity.

From a legislative point of view, a law (n.49/1988 and n. 12/89) considers the local authorities in Italy as actors of co-operation for the development and gave them the opportunity to work directly with the Ministry. However, even if the law exists, the provisions do not correspond to the real development of the situation and they need to be improved. A process of reform of the whole sector is now undergoing and a first amendment at the n.49/1988 has been already accepted by the Senate. Most of the regions have further on included the concepts of these laws in their own provisions and they are now dedicating part of their budget for this new form of co-operation.

The law is specifically decentralising responsibility to the Regions. The five autonomous regions (Sicily, Aosta Valley, Friuli Venezia Giulia, Trentino Alto Adige, Sardinia) have extended competences in this field.

The future of partnerships and decentralised co-operation for Italy will be certainly positive. The experience has shown that the local authorities are capable to undertake these activities with success and with relatively small financial investments. This is also an important way for a new fertilization of the whole community to the issue of development.

France¹

The French local authorities have been particularly active in South Eastern Europe in Serbia, for their historical long lasting co-operation. Some partnerships have been established also more than 30 years ago (like Suresnes and Kragujevac). However, the twinning or partnerships have been more dedicated, in Eastern Europe, to regions which are close the French language, as Roumania. The approach to SEE has been more strictly connected to specific situations like the support after the aftermath of the war.

In fact, this region is not very much interested by the international co-operation of French local authorities, which is mostly involved in European twinning and activities (especially with Germany).

The international decentralised co-operation is particularly followed by an association which is supporting and following the efforts of the local authorities in this field, Cités Unies France (www.cites-unies-france.org).

The decentralised co-operation is officially recognised by a law of 1992 but the process had started a long time before with the twinning between cities. In 2001, it was possible to count in France almost 6000 "actions of decentralised co-operation" towards 119 States. The two factors, which have mostly influenced the increase of this kind of co-operation are a) the decentralisation process of the public administration in the '80s b) the new Statute of the decentralised co-operation in 1992. Cities, NGOs and inter-communal actors started being involved. The *Conseil Généraux* have been eventually also actors of international co-operation.

The decentralised co-operation is divided in a) field actions b) action of general interest c) education for the development. The co-operation has been developed in many directions from the institution building to the infrastructures.

¹ Some of the information reported in this section are from a paper established by CUF regarding the partnership of the French local authorities. An important support has been given by a study realised by the *Observatori des polítiques publiques en Europe du Sud – Apprivoiser la Mondialisation*, rencontre nationales pour la coopération décentralisée 2001

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, through its Directorate General for the International Cooperation and Development established a procedure for funding the local authorities active in decentralised international co-operation. The projects are submitted by one or more local authorities, towards a clear and identified beneficiary, with an activity which is not just solidarity *stricto sensu*. The funding should not be superior to the support that the local authority itself would contribute to. A committee of decentralised co-operation has been established and it evaluates the programme regularly. From a geographical point of view, the Ministry gives the priorities to what they call *zones de solidarité prioritaires*.

A special fund, for the Balkans, has also been established at the *Caisse des Dépôts et Consignations*, which has the purpose to :

-identify the quality of the programmes of the local authorities (also from a financial point of view)

- to implement and monitor them
- to co-sponsor those programmes

The project is called *Fond Développement Balkans*². The objective is to work for the reconstruction in the Balkans and to support the democratisation process in the region as well as to offer a support to local authorities willing to participate in these activities. The principle of the co-financing is to bring together funds from the MAE, from the *Caisse des dépôts et consignations* and the support from the local authorities.

Most of the actions have been developed in Kosovo. Very few have been developed in "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" and Albania. The projects have been focused on the support of reconstruction and support to educational institutions. The DLB programme is expected to be completed at the end of the year 2002.

An extensive data base of the decentralised co-operation in France can be found in the *Commission Nationale de la Co-opération décentralisée*. It can be completed by the information given by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs which is financing activities of the local authorities and NGOs.

Germany

The international decentralised co-operation in Germany is mostly based on the actions of the Länder which co-ordinate their actions with the federal level.

In those last years, the federal government has established a special fund, which is co-sponsoring the partnerships between the German towns and the cities of Serbia and Montenegro. A co-ordination office (city of Düren) is in charge with the promotion of the programme towards the towns as well as the drafting of the requests.

Nevertheless, so far, only few towns started a co-operation on the issue of exchanges of good practices related to the local self government. Most of time, the partnership consists of a German town which is supporting an implementing NGO on the field (Red Cross, « Arbeiter Samariter Bund » ou au « Technisches Hilfswerk ». Nevertheless, the size of the contribution of the German actors in this process is paramount.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Germany is very in much in favour of partnerships with the support of other European towns.

² Information from *évaluation du Fond Développement Balkans, rapport final d'évaluation, Mai 2001*

United Kingdom

In June 1999, the *Foreign office* requested to the Local Government International Bureau to draft a programme of action in Serbia and Montenegro together with 6 local authorities interested in a co-operation for technical assistance for local management. Local partners in SEE have been contacted and identified. The programmes have received the support of the British Government.

Moreover, through the support of the Association of the Local Democracy Agencies, new local authorities have been supported in their action.

III PART Developing partnerships at regional level : the role of the LDA network

The Local Democracy Agencies (LDAs) and the Association of LDAs are an instrument at the disposal of local and regional authorities that wish to contribute as effectively as possible to support the democratisation and development process in the Balkan region and Eastern Europe. The purpose of the LDAs is to promote local democracy, reconstruction of civil society and intercultural dialogue.

The LDAs represent one of the important tool of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities for supporting the democratisation process in South and Eastern Europe.

This programme implements a specific methodology of international co-operation, which wants to confirm the necessity of building peace, development and stability in Europe, from the bottom. It is an ambitious experience which creates the co-operation between different actors at different level :

- a European institution (such as the Council of Europe is)
- local authorities
- NGOs

The programmes generates an organised and long lasting presence of local authorities from Western Europe involved in the programme. The principles, which are at the basis of the actions are a) the promotion of a shared and participated local development b) the role of the local authorities and the good governance in this process c) the participation of the civil society.

This on-going and participative process, and not just the results of our activities, is one of the main characteristics of the programme.

Thanks to the European basis of partnership backing the LDAs, it is possible to exchange the experience among the local authorities coming from different countries. The methodology here presented can also be reproduced for other situations, which have the same problems and difficulties as SEE.

➤ The network of the LDAs represents

10 offices (year 2002)

Croatia (Osijek, Sisak, Verteneglio/Brtonigla)

Bosnia and Herzegovina (Tuzla, Zavidovici, Prijedor)

Serbia and Montenegro (Subotica- Serbia, Central and Southern Serbia – Nis, Niksic, Montenegro)

“the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” (Ohrid)

This year the 11th office might be opened in Gjilane, Kosovo

4 countries of SEE in the regional programme

60 partner towns and regions in 13 European countries

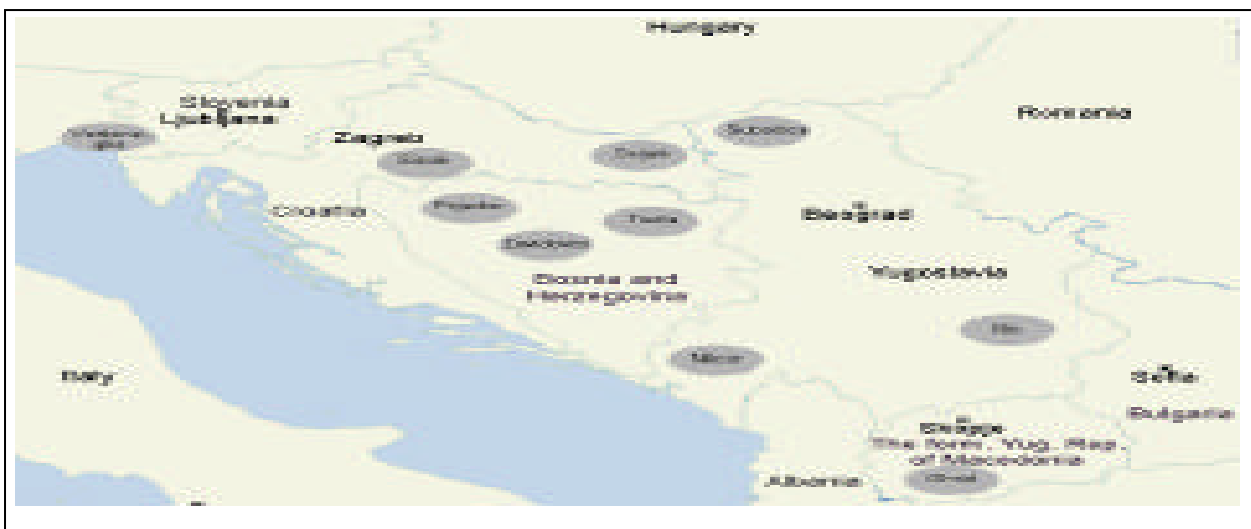
40 partner NGOs

10 years at work in the Balkans

Offices of the Local Democracy Agencies

- **SUBOTICA (FRY-SERBIA)**, Ms Stanka PARAC, Tel: +381/24 554 587. Fax: +381 24 553 116. E-mail: pstanka@openunsubotica.co.yu
- **OSIJEK/VUKOVAR (HR)**, Mr Miljenko TURNISKI, Tel: +385/31/20 30 88. Fax: +385/31/20 30 87. E-mail: miljenko.turniski@os.hinet.hr
- **SISAK (HR)**, Ms Tatjana PUSKARIC, Tel: + 385 44 521 227. Fax: + 385 44 521 231. E-mail: ldesk-si@sk.tel.hr, tatjana.puskaric@sk.hinet.hr
- **BRTONIGLA-VERTENEGLO (HR)**, Mr Tullio FERNETIC, Tel/fax: +385/52/774 617. E-mail: aldve-brtonigla@pu.hinet.hr
- **TUZLA (BiH)**, Mr Igor PELLICCIARI, Tel/fax: +387 75 251 396. E-mail: igorpel@tin.it, pellicciari@hotmail.com
- **ZAVIDOVICI (BiH)**, Mr Andrea ROSSINI, Tel/fax: + 387 72 877 008. E-mail: sladjan@bih.net.ba, anarinda@libero.it
- **PRIJEDOR (BiH)**, Ms Annalisa TOMASI, Tel/fax: + 387 79 220 003. E-mail: annalisa.tomasi@iol.it
- **OHRID (“the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”)**, Ms Miriana LOZANOSKA, Tel: + 389 96 26 12 90. Fax: + 389 96 26 12 98. E-mail: eldoh@mt.net.mk.
- **CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN SERBIA (NIS, FRY-SERBIA)**, Mr. Daniel STOJANOVIC, tel 00381 63 480 609, email : stojanovicd@hotmail.com
- **NIKSIC(FRY-MONTENEGRO)**, Mr. Dragutin DJEKOVIC., TEL 00381 69 018 618, drago2@cg.yu

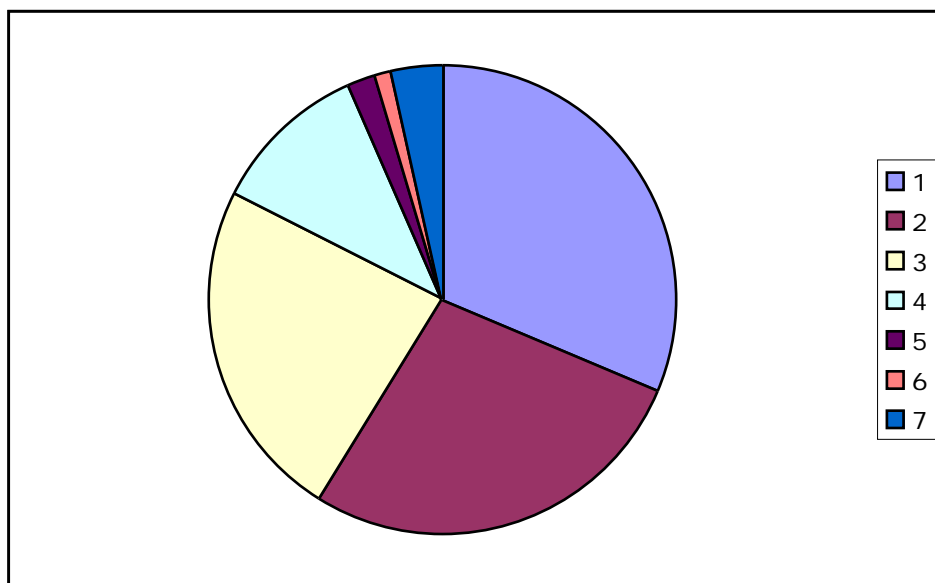
LDAs IN SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE



➤ **The mandate of the LDAs is**

- to promote practical initiatives to consolidate democracy at local level
- to enhance institution and capacity building at local level through exchange of know-how and training of local elected representatives and administrators
- to develop a Europe-wide network of citizens committed to respect for human and minority rights
- to foster the development of a civil society in which all sections of the community participate.
- to support intercultural dialogue
- to promote the respect for human rights

➤ **The LDAs Programme receives the support of**



1. **Swiss Agency for Development** - Stability Pact (sponsors activity of coordination of the Association and projects for 8 LDAs)
2. **Congress of Local and Regional Authorities – Council of Europe** (sponsors the coordination and institutional activities of the Association and projects for 10 LDAs). The Council of Europe supports substantially the Association of the LDAs with further contribution in kind (premises, staff, experts, translation, others).
3. **Irish Government** - Stability Pact (sponsors activity of coordination of the Association and projects for 2 LDAs)
4. **Local Government Initiative – Budapest** (sponsors co-ordination of the Association, 1 Training of Trainers, 1 training for 8 LDAs)
5. **Annual fees from the members of the Association of LDAs** (sponsor the co-ordination of the Association)
6. **Annual contribution of partners for the support to specific LDAs** (the city of Lausanne for the LDA in Osijek)
7. **Partners of the LDAs** (sponsors the activity of co-ordination and promotion of the Association of the LDAs)

In 2002, **Lichtenstein** has confirmed its contribution for a programme on “Trans-border co—operation and interethnic dialogue”

Each LDA is supported also by **other resources** (partners, public and private funds and the **Confidence Building Measures** programme of the Council of Europe), which are here not presented as not transferred through the Association of the LDAs.

➤ **Co-operation with the Stability Pact for South and Eastern Europe**

The Association of the Local Democracy Agencies has been, over last two years, an effective implementing unit of the activities of the Stability Pact for Southeast Europe, through the co-ordination of the Council of Europe in the framework of the activities of the Working Table I, "Democratisation and good governance".

➤ **The activities promoted by the Agencies**

- Training for local elected representatives and officials
- Schools of Civil society (with the support of the Council of Europe's Confidence-Building Measures Programme)
- Pre-election public information activities
- Training for young journalists in local democracy and intercommunity dialogue
- Transfrontier co-operation activities
- Activities to develop civil society and participation by young people
- Programmes to integrate minorities into the community
- Exchanges and debates with the European city partners
- Transfer of know how and exchanges of best practices

➤ **The partnership from European towns and regions :**

Every LDA project is based on an agreement setting out the practical contribution of the main partner local and regional authorities. These authorities provide technical and financial support and expertise for projects run by the LDA.

Through the network thus established, the other partner authorities have the opportunity to participate, as their resources and expertise permit, in a convincing and effective policy of external relations. Their involvement reflects a commitment by residents of the partner authorities. Depending on the needs voiced by the host authority, local and regional authorities and NGOs may take part in an LDA's programme of activities in a variety of ways.

One of the partners is designated the "**project leader**" and takes particular responsibility for managing the network, co-ordinating projects, raising funds and overseeing the administration and financing of the project.

A **host city** will be the Agency headquarter which constitute the basis for the activities. The main target groups are citizens, NGOs, elected representatives, local government officers and civil servants.

Through the network thus established, the partner authorities have the opportunity to participate, as their resources and expertise permit, in a convincing and effective policy of external relations. Their involvement reflects a commitment by residents of the partner authorities. Depending on the needs expressed by the host authority, local and regional authorities and NGOs may take part in an LDA's programme of activities in a variety of ways:

- *by funding specific projects (in the field of education, health, media, environment, youth or microeconomic projects, for example);*
- *by sending elected representatives or experts to lead seminars;*

- *by hosting study visits in partner towns, regions or associations;*
- *by establishing links between representatives from the socio-economic or voluntary sectors and key players in the host authority.*

LDAS' PARTNERSHIP NETWORK

SERBIA/MONTENEGRO**SERBIA**

SUBOTICA, Partners: Town of Subotica; Subotica Open University; Minority Rights Group – London (United Kingdom); Wolverhampton, United Kingdom, Olof Palme International Centre – Stockholm (Sweden)

CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN SERBIA (NIS), Lead Partner : Carlow County (Ireland); city of Nis, Kraljevo, Kragujevac and Leskovac, Barcelona – Spain, CITÉS UNIES (FRANCE), Balkan Assist Association (Bulgaria), East West Institute, Italian Consortium of Solidarity, Association for the Local Democracy Agency in Zavidovici, The House for Peace of Trento, Citizens' committee for former Yugoslavia Ivrea, Suresnes (France), CODESS Sociale S.r.l. ANSDIPP (Italy), standing Conference of Yugoslavian Towns, Kent County Council (UK), Reggio Emilia (I)

MONTENEGRO

NIKSIC, : Leader : East Staffordshire Borough Council (United Kingdom), Association of cities of Montenegro, City of Neuchatel (Switzerland), Association Betton-Monténégro (France), Region Friuli Venezia Giulia (Italy), Assembly of the European Regions. Interested : City of Geneva (Switzerland), AICCRE Marche (Italy), City of Ancona (Italy), Causes Communes Ticino (Switzerland), Foundation for the Support for Local Democracy (Poland)

CROATIA

OSIJEK/VUKOVAR, Partners: Town and district of Osijek; Leader : City of Lausanne (Switzerland); Parrains de l'Espoir – Illkirch (France), Utrecht Platform (the Netherlands), Causes Communes Vaud (Switzerland)

SISAK, Town of Sisak; Leader : town of *Mogliano Veneto*, Arese, Lainate, Casale Monferrato; Region of Veneto (Italy); Town of Martin (Slovakia); Province of Venice, city of Preganziol, "Peace and Development" Association; Charities - "Blessed are the Peacemakers", "The Bridge" and "Welcome for Families from the former Yugoslavia"; SOS Lipovljani (Italy)

BRTONIGLA-VERTENEGLIO, leader, City of Bellinzona (Switzerland), Causes Communes Switzerland and Province of Ravenna (Italy), Town of Brtonigla-Verteneglio and Region of Istria (Croatia); Province of Florence (Italy), Municipalities of Ravenna, Russi, Greve in Chianti, Portogruaro (Italy), Association Eurochianti (Italy)

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

TUZLA, Partners: Towns of Tuzla and Banja Luka (Bosnia and Herzegovina), ARCI Bologna and Emilia Romagna, PROGECO Bologna, ICS, Municipality of Belaria (Italy), NGOs associated to the Tuzla LDA Reference Group : Taldi, Bospo, Zamlja Djece (Terre des Hommes), Vive Zene, Biro za Ljudska Prava (Human Rights Office), Prijatelce, Care international, Save the Children, NSU National Support Unit, Bosfam, Crvenu Kriz Kanton (cantonal Red Cross), Ipak, Biro za Izbejegli Gradacac (Office of the Refugees), Farmer, MCE/SEA, Drina Srebrenica, Nasa Djeca (Our children Amica Educa, Amica Tuzlanska, Bosnia Vita, Sa e Roma, NDI CCI, Liga Zena Glasaca, Vesta, Forum Gradana. City of Saint-Denis (France)

ZAVIDOVICI, leader : Association for the Zavidovici LDA (Italy), Town of Zavidovici ; Municipality of Fléron (Belgium); County of South Lanarkshire (United Kingdom). The Association for the Zavidovici

LDA groups the Municipality of Alba; Association of Brescia Municipalities (Province of Brescia municipalities of Botticino, Roncadelle, Gussago, Chiari, Cazzago San Martino, Montichiari, Palazzolo, Caino, Travagliato and Desenzano); Province of Cremona (Province of Cremona municipalities of Crema, Soncino, Motta Baluffi, Calvatone, Gadesco P.D. and Romanengo) (Italy); “House of Peace” Association (Trento); First and Ninth Alba Scouts; ARCI –UISP “*Il sogno*” (Alba); “Zavidovici Project” Committee (Alba); Margarida Maria Alves Association (Alba); IPSIA-ACI Institute for Peace, Development and Innovation (Cuneo); “Alice” Co-operative (Alba); League for the Environment (Alba); Committee for Refugees (Alba); Movement for Development and Peace (Buttiglieria Alta – Torino); Caritas (Alba); “Women in Black” (Alba); CGIL trade union (Cremona); Fabio Moreni Group (Cremona); Mir Hoda Group (Cremona); “Initiative for Solidarity” Association (Brescia); MU&AP – Committee for the Organisation of Exhibitions, Staff Service (Brescia); Pensioners’ associations - SPI-CGIL, FNP-CISL and UILP-UIL (Brescia); UISP (Brescia)

PRIJEDOR, Partners: Town of Prijedor; leader : “*Prijedor Project*” Association (Italy); towns of Borgo Valsugana, Caderzone, Cavalese, Giustino, Massimeno, Pinzolo, Predazzo, Ronzo Chienis, Spiazzi, Tassullo, Trento and Varena (Italy); *Diputación de Córdoba* (Spain); Town and Canton of Saulieu (France); “House of Peace” Association (Trento); “Initiative for Solidarity” Association (Brescia); Association of World Trentini

“THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA”

OHRID, Towns of Ohrid, leader, *Karditsa* (Greece) and Piran (Slovenia); *Karditsa Development Agency* (Greece)

For further information, contact the Secretariat of the Association of Local Democracy Agencies, Director, Antonella VALMORBIDA
c/o Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe, Council of Europe, F-67075 Strasbourg Cedex, France. Tel: +0039 335 5236341. Fax: +33 (0)3 88 41 27 51/37 47.
E-mail: a.valmorbida@libero.it
Website : www.ldaaonline.org

IV PART Proposals for the future

The present situation in Southeast Europe is particularly interesting and in many ways determines the future developments. The emergency phase has come to an end, so that new forms of co-operation need to be established.

Characteristics of this new phase are:

- a) reduced level of international support from the financial point of view
- b) consolidated co-operation with local authorities and NGOs developed over the last 10 years
- c) stabilised situation in the region with democracies starting to function
- d) participation of citizens and development of civil society

More than in the past, the priorities and the actions will request a wider co-operation from the local authorities from the SEE as well as from the NGOs and citizens. There is going to be more space for a real, common, and participative co-operation in the aftermath of the war.

The partnerships between local authorities will start to bring their results from now on, much more than in the past. Training, education, exchanges of best practices, know-how, all the measures and tools which are specifically related to the international decentralised co-operation of cities and towns will be able to be fully implemented and successful within this new framework.

Following the analysis here made regarding the partnership, their opportunities, features and difficulties, it could be proposed, in order to enhance their work and impact, the following actions

1) A data base of the partnerships between towns and regions of Europe co-operation with South and Eastern Europe.

The data base should take into consideration : a) the actions made b) the context c) the size f) the resources.

National data bases have already been established (like in the UK or in Italy). The database proposed (it might be interactive) could be realised and based in the existing ALDA website.

The website will be a very important tool for strengthening synergies, exchanging information, using resources which are already at the disposal.

The partnerships here listed in the annexes should be then developed, completed and updated. The website would also inform about the legislative development of the European members States regarding the international decentralised co-operation and inform about the international and national support for such an action.

2) Development and information for the local authorities in Europe and South and Eastern Europe regarding the partnership between cities and regions

As already explained in the present document, one of the difficult issue encountered in the development of partnerships between cities and regions is the lack of internal capacities of the local authorities themselves. It can be related to communication (language, technical), to a lack of information related to this kind of co-operation, to a low level of competences of the local staff.

Those failures can be found, both in Europe and SEE.

In order to strengthen the partnerships and to enhance their effectiveness and long lasting effects, it is necessary to work on the professional skills of the local authorities. The decentralised co-operation might be introduced as a new aspect of the “regular” activities of the local authorities. It should be introduced the concept that someone, or a team, should specifically trained and dedicated to it, even in the medium size local authorities.

Moreover, the political level itself should be more informed about this opportunity and the positive outcome of such a co-operation.

From a practical point of view, those results could be pursued thanks to a campaign of sensibilisation organised by the Council of Europe, in particular by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, throughout Europe and SEE. Specific financial tools should be provided also thanks to a common funding that could come from other international or national donors.

3) Support to the networks for the partnerships between cities and regions

For the small and medium local authorities, the work and the survival of the partnership depend on the support. In order to support their commitment, those

networks have been established (some examples are the Association of the Local Democracy Agencies, Cités Unies France, LGIB, CREB – Italy, Osservatorio Balcani, Italy, Italian Consortium of Solidarity, Italy, other similar in other European Countries).

These networks should be supported in particular in improving their capacities and relations with the local authorities in SEE and Europe.

An initial step could be a specific seminar dedicated to the networks supporting the work of the local authorities in South and Eastern Europe. The seminar could define a) the difficulties and opportunities of those networks b) to exchange their experiences c) to put in relations their capacities and resources. The meeting could be organised in the framework of activities of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities in 2003.

This first step will define the methodology of improving the capacities of the networks supporting the partnership of the cities and regions in the future.

4) Follow up of the 9th economic Forum for Cities and Regions of SEE

The 9th economic Forum of Cities and Regions in the SEE will convey local authorities with the objective to create a forum of discussion for the partnerships in the area as well as with the intent to focus more on specific matters which are going to be the issues of the working groups. This formula might be an interesting one due to potential synergies that it creates and for the opportunities for meeting and contacts.

In addition, it might be interesting to organise thematic meetings dedicated to elaboration of specific aspects inherent to this co-operation. The element which will be the focal point of the forthcoming meetings will be the role of local authorities in decentralised co-operation with particular emphasis on potentials of local development and co-operation.

The option could be to subdivide them in :

- a) geographical area (by country) or based on trans-border co-operation programmes or Euroregions
- b) specific subjects (infrastructures, transports, environment, small and medium enterprises, refugees...

The choice for one or the other option, would be confirmed during the Forum in Novi Sad. However the methodology that would be appropriated could already been defined :

- participation of experts in the field identified
- participation of local authorities directly involved in the area/subject
- working groups
- case studies and exercises
- round tables with moderators

V Sources of information

In order to complete the information here presented, the following people have been contacted and interviewed.

Catherine DICKEAGE, Italian
 Consortium of Solidarity
Rostia VIOLA, Italian Consortium of Solidarity
 Via Salaria 89
 00198 ROMA
 tel 0039-06-85355081
 fax : +39-06-85355083
 catherineics@tin.it

Michele NARDELLI
Emiliano BERTOLDI
 Osservatorio sui Balcani
 Piazza San Marco 7
 38068 ROVERETO (TN)
 tell 0039 046) 442-4230
 email : trentino.serbia@libero.it
www.osservatoriobalcani.org

Laura DE ROSE
 Assemblée des Régions d'Europe
 Palais de l'Europe
 Place des Halles 20
 67054 Strasbourg
 tel : 0033/3/88220707
 fax : 0033/3/88756719
lderoose@are-regions-europe.org

Keith JONES
 East Staffordshire Borough Council
 DE14 2EB , city hall
 Town Burton upon Trent,
 Staffordshire, England
 +44 1283 508302
 +44 1283 508459
keith.jones@eaststffsbc.gov.uk

James BEADLE
 Local Government International Bureau
 Smith Square
 Local Government House
 London SW1P 3HZ
 UK
 Tel : 0044 207 664 3118
 Fax : 0044 207 664 3128
James.beadle@lgib.gov.uk

Graziano LORENZON
 Regione Friuli Venezia Giulia
 Piazza Unità d'Italia
 34121 Trieste
 Italy
 Tel : 0039/040/3773737
 Fax : 0039/040/3773701

Andreas KORB
 Cités Unies France
 9, rue de Christiani
 75018 Paris
 France
 Tel : 0033 1 53 41 81 99
 Fax : 0033 1 53 41 81 41
a.korb@cites-unies-france.org

Gianfranco MARTINI
 AICCRE
 Piazza Fontana di Trevi
 ROMA
 Italy
 Tel : 0039 06 6994-0461
 Email : gemellaggi@aiccre.it

Joseph VOSEN
 Coordinator for municipal project
 partnerships
 Federal Republic of Germany Serbia -
 Montenegro
 D-52353 Düren,
 Aldenhovener Strasse 32
 Phone: +49-2421-82456
 Mobile: +49-170 - 5320105
 Fax: +49-2421-920858
 E-Mail: Josef.Vosen@s-dn.de

Hocine TANDJAOU
 Caisse des depots et Consignations
 67, rue de Lille
 75007 Paris
 tel : 0033 1 40 49 43 64
hocine.tandjaoui-caissedesdepots.fr

Joeke ABBING
 VNG International
 Nassaulaan 12
 The Hague, The Netherlands 2500
 Tel : 0031 70 373 83 61
joeke.abbings@vng.nl (Work)

Daniel STOJANOVIC

Delegate LDA Nis, collaborator of the
Austrian Association of towns
Tel 00381 63 480 609
stojanovicd@hotmail.com

Causes Communes Suisse

President**Madame l'Ambassadeur****Marianne Von Grünigen**

Bleicherain 7

Lenzburg 5600 – CH

Tel : 0041 62) 888-0150

info@ggs-ccs.ch (Work)

City of Barcellona

Francesc FONT FREIXA

Director of the international co-operation

Ciutat, 11, principal

Barcellona 08002

Spain

Tel : (3493) 402-7314

ffreixa@mail.bcn.es

Ministère des Affaires Etrangères

Chef de Mission, Bureau de la coopération
décentralisée - Mission pour la
coopération non-gouvernementale

Françoise SELLIER

57, Boulevard des Invalides

Paris, France 757000

francoise.sellier@diplomatie.fr