

Networking as a tool to multiply town to town relations

Over the past 15 years the Local Democracy Agencies (LDA) and their Association (ALDA) have proved to be one of the most important networks at the European level in promoting European values, human rights, democracy and sustainable development of the local governmental institutions.

ALDA's main partners and members include regional and local authorities, civil society organizations from more than 28 countries in Europe and its neighborhood.

Overall objective of the project

To support creation and development of interregional networking, exchange of good practices, and promotion of innovation and know-how by multiplying relations between cities and towns in Europe.

Specific objectives

1. To create/to strengthen the dialogue between a relevant number of local authorities in Europe, including those which are partners of the Local Democracy Agencies.
2. To promote and disseminate European values promoting and strengthening twinning agreements and relations
3. To stimulate initiatives in the framework of twinning relations or city-to-city agreements, to stimulate contact between civil organizations, schools, youth and sports organizations supporting cultural, informational and sports exchange
4. To disseminate information regarding the network of twin towns and promote the network both at the and at the international level

Expected results

1. The dialogue between numerous local authorities in Europe has started
2. Network of towns is established
3. Strong links between LDAs and local authorities are created

Project outcome

- Network of towns is established

Activities

- **Study visit** (most probably in Croatia)

A study visit will be organized in the scope of the project. The study visit will serve as a tool to improve the understanding of the methodology of the multilateral decentralized cooperation directly at the ground level. It will provide enhancement

and initiation of multilateral projects and serve as an important way of promoting better communication perspectives for the authorities of towns involved. The LDAs play an important role in the region, they have been widely recognized as fundamental stakeholders in the stabilization and democratization process of the areas. In each location LDA partner organizations have already established some sort of relationship; they meet and discuss various topics. The aim of this study visit will be to help partners of different LDA, towns and cities from all over Europe, to meet and maybe think about moving to another level – to multiplying their channels with each other and to commence new ideas. The composition of a visiting delegation will correspond to the goal of the twin city meeting. Main topics for discussion will be following: 1) Promotion of active European Citizenship, 2) Fostering future cooperation, 3) Understanding the decentralized cooperation. The delegation will include also the city regional municipal officials and elected citizens.

- **Summer school for students** (in Strasbourg, France)

A summer school will be organized for youth coming from partners towns. Between 60 to 80 young person will be participating in 3 days long gathering. Invited lectures and speakers will be actively involved in this event, debates about EU policies, exchange of ideas between youth and political debates will be encouraged during the meeting. The main issues tackled by the Summer School are: (1) civil society dialogue and participation; (2) EU policies (3) Fostering cooperation; (4) Difficulties and opportunities in multilateral decentralized cooperation. Other issues will be identified during the implementation of the project. As a result of meeting the following competencies will be achieved: Understanding of mechanisms and opportunities of decentralized cooperation; exchange of experiences and understanding of the benefits of collaboration between youth coming from different twined towns; understanding of the functioning of the main European Institutions.

- **Working groups at the local level**

Several working group meetings will be initiated locally (in partners towns) aiming at promoting dialogue between civil society organizations, volunteers and all interested parties around the idea of towns twinning networking and cooperation development. Practical understanding of decentralized cooperation and benefits of networking and twined towns will be achieved by the involved stakeholders at the local level.

- **Awareness raising and information campaign**

Information campaign: a) Creation of a web site - as a crucial tool for the dissemination of the information; it will ensure the multiplying effect to every town involved in the project together with others who are not yet involved; b) monthly newsletters will be issued and widely disseminated; c) awareness raising campaign at local level – during the meetings of civil society organizations informational brochures and booklets will be distributed

- **Policy making meeting** (in Brussels)

A Policy making meeting will be the last event of the proposed project. Partners and twined towns will be embodied by 5 delegates; including representatives from local

policy making level, economic sphere, sports union, education and civil society/volunteer. The main objective of the meeting will be supporting begin of the dialogue between these mixed groups from different regions and cities amongst each other. The meeting will allow to bringing together all interested parties for sharing opinions, discussing achievements and problems/gaps and reaching agreement necessary for identifying future strategy and action plan. As a result, new strategies on twined town networking and communication will be developed.