

PAPER A - APPENDIX

LOCAL DEMOCRACY AND TRANSFRONTIER CO-OPERATION

*Achievements, current and planned work of the Council of Europe
Directorate of Co-operation for Local and Regional Democracy and the Congress of
Local and Regional Authorities of Europe
(2001-2003)*

Information document as at 1 June 2002

The following fields of action correspond to the priorities that the Council of Europe has identified and is currently working on, in the light of experience and the requests emanating from the countries of the region.

1. Legislative assistance with a view to developing a sound legal framework for local self-government

In 2001, legal expertise was been provided to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) and “The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” especially in the framework of the implementation of the “Ohrid Agreement” of 13 August 2001 (new laws on local authorities, local finance).

A database (www.loreg.org) has been set up which contains hundreds of items: international instruments, national legislation and documentation on various aspects of local government, including management of local public services and good practice in service delivery.

- *In 2002-03 within the Council of Europe, the Directorate of Co-operation for Local and Regional Democracy will continue to provide assistance to SEE countries engaged in reforming local government and that requested it, in particular the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro), “The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” (continued implementation of the “Ohrid Agreement”) and Albania, through expert mission, written assessment of draft laws, joint working parties. The Loreg database will be expanded.*

2. Field-work to develop institutional capabilities and responsive leadership at local level

In 2000-01, the in-country and regional work focussed on the management of the training needs of local authorities and the definition of national training strategies for local government personnel. Specific attention was paid to the role of national associations of local authorities, whose establishment and functioning in various countries was supported. A “Network of National Associations of Local Authorities (NALAs) of SEE” was set up.

- *In 2002-03, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe will continue to provide assistance and training to the members of NALA, through adequate training facilities for NALA staff and management, in co-operation with the Association of the Local Democracy Agencies (ALDA) and the European Network of Training Organisations (ENTO). The Network will be co-ordinated by the National association of municipalities of the republic of Bulgaria and will meet regularly.*
- *The Directorate of Co-operation for Local and Regional Democracy will pursue specific in-country initiatives in Albania and in “The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” aimed at better co-ordination between different actors with a view to agreeing on a common strategy and joining effort to implement it effectively.*

3. Financial management and service provision at local level

In 2001, four regional activities with the involvement of partners from the FDI network (in particular, the World Bank, but also Soros-LGI) were devoted to local finance and intergovernmental fiscal relations in South-Eastern Europe, the management of local public services and municipal property and to strategic planning and management of public services in capital and large cities.

Two national seminars were also organised in “The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” to promote fiscal decentralisation and foster the ongoing reform in the field of local finance.

The guidelines adopted at the Belgrade Regional Conference of May 2001 served as a *vademecum* for reforms to be introduced in the countries of the region, in a co-ordinated way, in accordance with recognized European standards.

- *In 2002-03, the Directorate of Co-operation for Local and Regional Democracy will continue to work in co-operation with international institutions to provide assistance to Bosnia and Herzegovina, “The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) in the fields of fiscal reform, financial decentralisation and public service management, through expert mission, written assessment of draft laws, joint working groups, regional workshops open to all the countries of the region.*

4. Democratic citizenship and responsive leadership at local level

In 2001, a project on the development of democratic citizenship was launched in Bulgaria and Romania. Two national workshops were held in May 2001, in Sofia and Bucharest respectively which focused on major vacuums in legal and administrative frameworks and other obstacles that may hamper citizen involvement. Subsequently, two pilot projects for each country were devised and their implementation started last year.

- *In 2002-2003, the Directorate of Co-operation for Local and Regional Democracy has started a new project on “Democratic citizenship and responsive leadership in Europe”. It is conceived around “modules” that can be adopted and implemented in each country interested. Besides the ongoing projects in Bulgaria and Romania, two modules for Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia and Montenegro will start after the organisation of a multilateral launching conference.*

5. Intercultural dialogue

A network composed of ten Local Democracy Agencies is operating in four Southeast European countries, i.e. Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Subotica, Niksic and Nis), Croatia (Osijek/Vukovar, Sisak and Brtonigla-Verteneglio), Bosnia and Herzegovina (Tuzla, Zavidovici and Prijedor) and “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” (Ohrid).

The network of Agencies, animated by the Association of LDAs, supports pilot projects in the following fields:

- *Training of local elected representatives and civil servants* (activities developed in all Agencies, notably through the TOT Project (LGI) and those sponsored by the CLRAE)
- *Promotion of Interethnic relations and Confidence building measures* with the support of the Council of Europe (Zavidovici, Ohrid, Tuzla, Subotica)
- *Transborder co-operation* (Osijek, Brtonigla-Verteneglio, Ohrid, Nis, Niksic)
- *Refugees* (Zavidovici, Prijedor, Sisak, Brtonigla-Verteneglio)
- *Youth* (Zavidovici, Prijedor)
- *Medias* (Zavidovici, Prijedor)
- *Women’s role in society* (Sisak)

In 2000 and 2001, the LDAs also implemented activities for the promotion of intercultural dialogue and development of civil society.

- *In 2003, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe will continue to support the LDA network especially as regards the projects on interethnic relations, youth, refugees and women.*

6. Reinforcing Transfrontier Co-operation

In 2001-02, an in-depth analysis of the “strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats” of transfrontier co-operation in the SEE has been conducted, whose findings should be released soon. In-field action concentrated on the establishment of a Euroregion in the Ohrid and Prespa lakes area encompassing Albania, Greece and “The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”. Bulgaria and “The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” have benefited from a training programme aimed at developing an “open attitude” towards transfrontier co-operation in central state administration, basing on the experience of the Czech Republic.

- *In 2002-03, the work of the Directorate of Co-operation for Local and Regional Democracy will concentrate on the dissemination of the findings of the SWOT analysis and the implementation of its recommendations, possibly through one or more regional conferences. To this end, the following will be taken into consideration: the conclusion of the appropriate agreements concerning the establishment of an Euroregion of the Ohrid and Prespa lakes and the encouragement to the setting up of other Euroregions in the areas at the junction of FYROM-BG-FRY (Serbia), BiH-FRY (Montenegro)-HR and the deepening or enlarging of the existing co-operation within the Danube-Drava-Sava Euroregion (to Bosnia and Herzegovina and Vojvodina) and the Danube-Kris-Mures-Tisza Euroregion (strengthening the role of Vojvodina) ; the dissemination of the methodology of the “Open attitude” project in other countries of the region.*
- *The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities will start working on the “political declaration” on the development of transfrontier co-operation between local and regional authorities in South East Europe as well as on a multilateral inter-state agreement in this area, drawing on examples existing elsewhere in Europe.*
- *Action will involve expert missions, legal advice for the drafting of statutes of Euroregions, sharing of experience through exchanges of staff and managers of Euroregions between Western and Eastern European countries, in-country visits.*

7. Partnerships and twinnings with cities and regions of SEE

Direct links with cities and regions of SEE and counterparts in Europe have been established over recent years. In 2000 and 2001, the “Fora of cities and regions of SEE” were good opportunities for mayors of cities and regional managers to forge personal links that will later develop into technical partnerships or twinning, thus complementing intergovernmental assistance.

The Fourth Forum of Cities and Regions of SEE took place in Novi Sad in April 2002.

- *In 2002, following the Novi Sad Forum of cities and regions of SEE, action by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities will focus on the reinforcement of the*

co-operation, in particular between Danube cities and regions as well as on local economic development with the contribution of medium-sized enterprises.

8. Co-operation between elected local and regional representatives of South East Europe

A Group, composed of the members of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe from South East European countries, has been established with a view to assisting the Congress Secretariat in the drafting and the implementation of Stability Pact activities in South East Europe. It should voice the common interests of South East European local and regional authorities within the Congress and will be consulted on relevant issues. This Group could also be a valuable political tool at the disposal of the Stability Pact institutions.

- *In 2002, the Group has met twice on the occasion of the meetings of the Standing Committee and the plenary session of the Congress in Strasbourg. It will meet again on the occasion of the forthcoming meetings of either organ.*