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**THIRD SESSION**

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**REPORT**

ON

**LOCAL DEMOCRACY EMBASSIES**

**A contribution to democratic security**

**Rapporteur: Mr Gianfranco MARTINI (Italy)**

**EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM**

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**Members of the Working group:** Mr Gianfranco Martini (Chair, Italy, L), Mr Stanislav Bernát (Slovakia, R), Ms Evalisa Birath-Lindvall (Sweden, R), Mr Claude Casagrande (France, L), Mr Athanassios Kantartzis (Greece, L), Mr Jan Olbrycht (Poland, L), Mr Klemensas Rimselis (Lithuania, L) Ms Beate Weber (Germany, L) (substitute Mr Horst Lässig, L).

**Secretaries responsible:** Ms Affholder and Ms Lecaillier.

## A. Recapitulation of principles and state of implementation of the programme

1. Initiated in 1993 by the Standing Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe, the local democracy embassy (LDE) programme reflected the determination of local and regional elected representatives to support their opposite numbers in the countries formed after the break-up of the old Yugoslav Federation, in co-operation with NGOs. This action has involved establishing partnerships against the background of a conflict which resulted in widespread massacres of civilians, refugee movements and "ethnic cleansing", the consequences of which will be very difficult to deal with.

2. The local democracy embassy programme implemented by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe (CLRAE) is aimed at setting up support structures for local democracy in the broad sense of the term, particularly in municipalities which, despite the war, have sought to preserve multiculturalism and enable the different communities to live side-by-side. The major principles of the programme were defined in Resolution 251 (1993) of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe and embodied in Resolution 25 (1995), Recommendation 15 (1995), Ms Tovornik's explanatory report (CG (2) 20 Part II) and the present draft resolution and draft recommendation of the Congress.

3. Five local democracy embassies have so far been established in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia [Serbia and Montenegro] (Subotica and Vojvodina), Slovenia (Maribor), Croatia (Osijek-Vukovar and Brtonigla-Verteneglio), and Bosnia-Herzegovina (Tuzla and Sarajevo). Two further local democracy embassies are to be opened by the end of the year in Sisak (Croatia) and Ohrid (former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia). Proposals are being considered for opening local democracy embassies in Mostar and Zavidovici (Bosnia-Herzegovina), Banja Luka (Republika Srpska of Bosnia-Herzegovina) and, at the invitation of the Parliamentary Assembly<sup>1</sup>, Kosovo (Federal Republic of Yugoslavia) [Serbia and Montenegro]. Local democracy embassies are set up on the basis of a partnership between European towns, cities, regions and NGOs, which jointly operate the LDE and provide for the permanent presence of a Delegate *in situ*. The programme is co-ordinated from Strasbourg by the Monitoring Committee on local democracy embassies, a Congress working group made up of local and regional elected representatives who work together with local democracy embassy Delegates, project leaders and other active and associate members.

4. The local democracy embassy programme is intended for areas at risk of inter-ethnic conflict and tension. Requests have been received from countries situated outside the current working area, which bears witness to the importance of the LDEs and the need to reinforce their means of action, as the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe stressed in Recommendation 1297 (1996) on the implementation of the Dayton Agreements for Peace in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Although it is not against the idea of a geographical extension of the programme, the Bureau of the Congress has considered that it should for the time being concentrate its action on the states formed after the disappearance of the old Yugoslav

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<sup>1</sup> See Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 1288 (1996) on Albanian asylum-seekers from Kosovo.

Federation and the regions directly or indirectly suffering the consequences of the war. Consequently, if a local democracy embassy were to be set up in a country for which such facilities are not currently planned, the prior agreement of the Bureau would be needed.

## **B. The Dayton Agreements: a new phase in the implementation of the programme**

5. Local democracy embassies can implement local activities aimed at promoting and reinforcing local democracy in a very broad sense, particularly through dialogue and tolerance between different communities. Such activities include organising conferences, seminars, study visits by the partners, exchanges and trouble-shooting in the field of human rights and the rights of minorities, refugees and displaced persons, the media, and also micro-economic projects and the training of local authority staff and the employees of enterprises involved in reconstruction. The setting up of Civil Society Schools (supported by the Council of Europe's "Confidence-Building Measures" programme) has provided most of the LDEs with a forum for discussion and dialogue by running evening classes on a wide variety of subjects for the general public.

6. The signing of the peace agreements in 1995 imparted new impetus to the local democracy embassy programme. The activities, particularly those in areas directly affected by the implementation of the agreements, can now be fully implemented. The local democracy embassies in Tuzla, Osijek, Sarajevo, and, in the near future, Sisak, are involved in implementing the civilian strand of the peace agreements. It should also be noted that the co-operation which has gradually grown up between the local democracy embassies will foster dialogue between the different states and also between the different population groups in them.

7. The input which local democracy embassies can potentially provide in the run-up to elections should not be underestimated, because in supporting local democracy the LDEs should be able to encourage the political parties to air their views and help the independent media to inform the public and alert the electorate to the issues involved in the elections, etc. These activities in fact complement those run by the international institutions. LDE activities are directed at civil society, promoting citizen participation in the process of developing democracy, and can accordingly reinforce the peace-making machinery installed by the international community. The co-operation between the Osijek-Vukovar local democracy embassy and the United Nations Transitional Administration for Eastern Slavonia (UNTAES) has been exemplary. Furthermore, local democracy embassies provide logistical support for the Council of Europe's official missions and also an outpost for the Council of Europe activities being conducted in the region (transfrontier co-operation, activities regarding the Roma (gypsies), equality between men and women, the media, etc), which also involve members of the Parliamentary Assembly.

8. The return of refugees is one example of a field in which LDEs are active. It is a distressing problem attended by numerous legal and psychological difficulties. Return often proves impossible because housing has been destroyed and "ethnic cleansing" has left its mark. As the Parliamentary Assembly has stressed on several occasions, populations can only be returned on a voluntary basis and the process must be accompanied, as has been proposed

by associations such as Causes Communes Belgique, by action to develop the host community's economy, thus facilitating effective "repatriation", resettlement of the populations and provision of the requisite jobs to restart the economy.

9. The local democracy embassies receive requests for assistance from all quarters, and this boom in their activities must be properly managed. LDEs are supported by the Council of Europe (Emergency Measures, Confidence-Building Measures, programme co-ordination by the CLRAE), the European Union (Phare Democracy and budget heading B7-7001), and towns, regions and associate NGOs which often directly help organise LDE activities. A Special Local Democracy Embassy Account maintained by the territorial authorities, who were invited to continue and intensify their efforts in an Appeal launched by the President of the Congress in April 1996, is used for funding selective operations. The work of the local democracy embassies will require increased resources, particularly for those LDEs situated on the fringes of areas directly hit by the war. The work of the local democracy embassies is reinforced by the existence of this network for the exchange of information and experiences.

### C. Supporting local democracy with a view to democratic security in the region

10. It should be noted that peace remains uncertain despite the agreements signed by the warring parties, and that the context in which the local democracy embassies have to work is still fraught with difficulty. The conflict among the various communities has shattered social relations and co-operation structures. Nationalist sentiments are still intense and aggressive and the rule of law requires a great deal of further development before it becomes a reality.

11. The work of the local democracy embassies, with its broad mandate, is helping develop the concept of democratic security as formulated at the Vienna Summit. Democratic cohesion, social cohesion and quality of life, cultural cohesion and cultural pluralism are encouraged by the activities conducted. While local democracy embassy action remains local and limited, it provides a practical contribution to implementing the peace-making and stabilisation process, re-establishing trust between citizens and developing democratic practices by stimulating the local voluntary network. Local democracy embassies have become recognised partners in the life of the local community.

12. Local democracy embassies co-operate closely with the host local and regional authorities, as a desire on their part to develop pluralism and multiculturalism and their agreement to setting up an LDE and implementing the projects are prerequisites for any *in situ* activity<sup>2</sup>. It is also useful for the local democracy embassies to be legally recognised by the national authorities<sup>3</sup>, as this optimises their operational capacities.

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<sup>2</sup> Co-operation between the Subotica LDE and the regional authorities still presents problems.

<sup>3</sup> It should be noted that the Croatian and Slovenian national authorities have now legally recognised the LDEs situated within their territory.

13. The local democracy embassy network also promotes the spirit of mutual tolerance and co-operation beyond the new borders. It stimulates the exchange of ideas and experiences not only between the local democracy embassies but also between the respective local and regional authorities, forging new links. This aspect is especially important at a time when economies must be restructured, outlets redefined and prosperity re-established, with a view to stabilising the economies of these regions. Twinning arrangements have been made between the cities of Osijek (Croatia), Maribor (Slovenia) and Tuzla (Bosnia and Herzegovina), which all have local democracy embassies; this shows that regional dynamics have been stimulated by the presence of the LDEs and is a promising sign for the future.

14. Lastly, local democracy embassies are a vehicle for the information and education of local and regional elected representatives regarding the Council of Europe's legal instruments and assistance programmes, particularly those relating to local democracy. The European Charter of Local Self-Government and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages could be major sources of inspiration for cities within the states which have requested or obtained Council of Europe membership (human rights, social and economic policies, etc). Such efforts at this level will eventually lead to "a genuine area of democratic security and stability". Even when the conflict was at its worst, the dialogue instigated between towns and cities with LDEs and the associated local and regional authorities helped break the isolation of these municipalities, determined as they were to maintain their multiculturalism, and is now contributing to the pan-European dimension of the CLRAE's activities.

**D. Reinforcing the action of local and regional authorities to create a pluralist civil society and a local democracy respecting the fundamental rights**

15. The local and regional authorities of Europe are essential components of the local democracy embassy programme. LDEs can be set up, activities devised, exchanges implemented and international co-operation initiated only with the involvement of the towns, cities and regions of Europe, as Mr Alexander Tchernoff, President of the CLRAE, pointed out in his "Appeal to the Mayors of Towns and Municipalities and Presidents of Regions of Europe" in April 1996. The involvement of European towns and regions presupposes not only financial support for the maintenance and operation of these structures, but also political impetus for the project, which is first and foremost an inter-city and interregional partnership. Co-operation in setting up a local democracy embassy often has useful after-effects: twinings between host and partner towns, economic exchanges, training for territorial authority staff, youth programmes, etc. Examples are the involvement of the City of Bologna in Tuzla, Lausanne in Osijek, Barcelona in Sarajevo, and the partnerships maintained by a group of cities (Causes Communes Belgium in Maribor, Causes Communes Switzerland in Brtonigla-Verteneglio).

16. However, the local and regional authorities involved in this programme cannot alone bear the financial burden of the operation, activities and projects of a local democracy embassy. They therefore have to seek other sponsors (Council of Europe, European Union, individual member states of the Council of Europe). It is for the territorial authorities of Europe to muster the resources to support local democracy and the local and regional elected representatives of the region sharing the Council of Europe's founding principles, through this

programme developed by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe, reflecting a political will to contribute to the democratic development and the stabilisation of this region.

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17. In conclusion, it must be stressed that the local democracy embassies have proved to be operational structures on the ground which are appreciated by the host municipalities and serve as a base for a wide variety of actions conducted by the international institutions, NGOs and the partner towns and regions. These encouraging results have, however, necessitated the political and financial involvement of the partner towns, regions and NGOs and the financial support of the sponsors. The continuation of the embassies' activities will depend on whether these two aspects can be reinforced. There are more and more ways of co-operating and supporting the peace process: becoming an LDE partner, contributing to the Special Local Democracy Embassy Account or participating in the rehabilitation projects for the region's public services listed by the LDE Delegates, all these are effective means of providing direct and practical support for local democracy. These are the main aims of this report and the related draft resolution and draft recommendation.

Local democracy embassies are in favour of citizens from host towns or regions being aware of events promoting solidarity and of issues related to the general interest in other European countries. In this way, the LDEs stimulate awareness of the necessity for countries stemming from the Former Yugoslav Federation to participate, as soon as the necessary conditions are met, in the process of European integration.

Appendices: List of LDEs operating and the main partner towns.

## APPENDIX

LOCAL DEMOCRACY EMBASSIES

## LIST AND PARTNERSHIP

Operational LDEs

<b>SUBOTICA</b>	Federal Republic of Yugoslavia [Serbia-Montenegro], Voivodina region
<b>OSIJEK-VUKOVAR</b>	Croatia, Region of Slavonia
<b>MARIBOR</b>	Slovenia
<b>TUZLA</b>	Bosnia and Herzegovina
<b>SARAJEVO</b>	Bosnia and Herzegovina
<b>BRTONIGLA-VERTENEGLIO</b>	Croatia, Istria Region

LDEs to be opened soon

<b>SISAK</b>	Croatia, Western Slavonia
<b>OHRID</b>	"The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia"

May 1996

Operational local democracy embassies

**SUBOTICA (Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Voivodina region)**

<i>Creation</i>	1993
<i>Delegate</i>	Mrs Nadia SENDEROVIĆ-ČUK ( <i>ad interim</i> )
<i>Specific activities<sup>4</sup></i>	Organisation of seminars on human rights and democracy in the local community, School for Civil Society <sup>5</sup>
<i>Partners</i>	Tilburg (Netherlands), Namur (Belgium), Elche (Spain), Causes Communes Belgium, Netherland Association of Cities, Centre for International Co-operation of Tilburg

Subotica is called a *local democracy agency*.

**OSIJEK-VUKOVAR (Croatia, Region of Slavonia)**

<i>Creation</i>	1994
<i>Delegate</i>	Mr François FRIEDERICH
<i>Specific activities</i>	School for Civil Society, trade links, Newsletter, participation in the process of the peaceful reintegration of Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium by application of the Erdurt and Paris Agreements <sup>6</sup> , support to independant media, trans-border co-operation programmes, activities of reconstruction, monitoring of human rights, students exchanges, publications, mediation missions between communities
<i>Project leader</i>	Lausanne (Switzerland)
<i>Partners</i>	Gödöllő (Hungary), Haarlem, Renkum, Wageningen (Netherlands), Causes Communes Belgium, Vaud Regional Committee of Causes Communes Switzerland, Association Parrains de l'Espoir France

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<sup>4</sup> Specific activities of the LDEs refer to the activities developed in addition to their traditional work, described in the document CPL/XY (28) 27.

<sup>5</sup> The Schools for Civil Society is a project funded by the Confidence-building measures programme of the Council of Europe.

<sup>6</sup> Project supported by the Confidence-building measures programme and the Measures of Emergency programme of the Council of Europe.



**MARIBOR (Slovenia)**

<i>Creation</i>	1994
<i>Delegate</i>	Mr Patrick QUINET
<i>Specific activities</i>	Updating of information about European policies linked to the return of refugees in Bosnia and Herzegovina, co-ordination of a television network(TV Demo), co-ordination of activities in north-east Slovenia, School for Civil society, hosting information between all LDEs through meetings and electronic mailing (under consideration)
<i>Partners</i>	Brussels (Belgium), Blanc-Mesnil (France), Causes Communes Belgium
<i>Other contacts</i>	Graz (Austria), Pétange (Luxembourg), Marburg (Germany), Szombatély (Hungary), Greenwich (United Kingdom)

**TUZLA (Bosnia and Herzegovina)**

<i>Creation</i>	1995
<i>Delegate</i>	Mr Igor PELLICCIARI
<i>Specific activities</i>	Conferences on democracy, role of the media, return of refugees, intercultural education, evolution of the political and social systems in teh region; Newsletter and booklet on the Conferences, promotion of the LDE in local the media; strengthening of democracy (School for civil society, meetings with political and religious representatives in the Canton of Tuzla and in Bosnia, in Croatia, in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, regular contacts with the other LDEs); support to the economic recovery; support tto existing and planned projects in the fileds of humanitarian, ccultural, artistic and sport solidarity; support to training projects
<i>Project co-ordinator</i>	City of Bologna
<i>Partners</i>	Bologna (Italy), Malmö (Sweden), Antwerp (Belgium), Rennes (France), Rubí, Barcelona (Spain), Causes Communes Switzerland, Causes Communes Belgique, Nuova Frontiera, Pro Europa (Italy), European Union

Tuzla is also twinned with Osijek, and their LDEs are to co-operate with each other.

**SARAJEVO (Bosnia and Herzegovina)**

<i>Creation</i>	1996
<i>Delegate</i>	Mrs Teresa SANDOVAL
<i>Project co-ordinator</i>	City of Barcelona

*Sarajevo*

*Specific activities* Implementation of social programmes, support to the city reconstruction, Media and communication between districts, School for Civil society

*Partners* Barcelona (Spain), Budapest (Hungary), Lisbon (Portugal), Ljubljana (Slovenia), Vienna (Austria), Schiltigheim, Bischheim and Hoenheim (France)

**BRTONIGLA-VERTENEGLIO (Croatia, Istria Region)**

*Creation* 1996

*Project co-ordinator* Ticino Regional Committee (Causes Communes Switzerland)

*Partners* Bellinzona (Switzerland), Russi, Portogruaro, Greve, Region of Emilia-Romagna (Italy), Causes Communes Switzerland, Nuova Frontiera (Italy)

*Contact* Marmande (France)

**SISAK (Croatia, Western Slavonia)**

*Creation* Planned in July 1996

*Project co-ordinator* ANCI Veneto

*Partners* Region of Venice, Region of Lombardy, Mogliano Veneto, Arese Lainate, Pregnana (Italy), Causes Communes Switzerland, Causes Communes France, Studies and training Centre on human and peoples' rights (Padova University), Committee in favour of peace activities (Alto Vicentino), Committee for peace (Arese, Lainate, Pregnana), Union SOS Lipovljani (Italy)

*Other contacts* Puglia Region, Conversano (Italy), Linz (Austria), Turiec (Slovakia), Association of towns of the region of Brescia, Association of the Trade Houses of the Venice Region - Eurosportello, Beati i Costruttori di Pace di Padova (Italy)

**OHRID ("The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia")**

*Creation* Planned in September 1996

*Partners* Karditsa (Greece), Piran (Slovenia), Versoix (Switzerland), Digne (France), Pendle (United Kingdom)

*Other contacts* Region of Graz (Austria), Pogradec, Kukes (Albania), St-Médard en Jalles (France)