



**BYDGOSZCZ (PL)**  
**8<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2011**



The Conference is co-financed by the Association of Polish Cities and by the European Regional Development Fund within the Regional Operational Programme for Kujawsko-Pomorskie Voivodeship for the years 2007-2013 and the budget of Kujawsko-Pomorskie Voivodeship

## PRESS RELEASE

### “VOLUNTEERING FOR DEMOCRACY”

**On 8th July 2011 an international conference “Volunteering for democracy”, organised as part of the European Year of Volunteering 2011, will be held in Bydgoszcz, Poland. The project is realised by the Bydgoszcz City Hall and ALDA – the Association of Local Democracy Agencies – for the promotion of voluntary services and civil participation.**

The promotion of voluntary services and civil participation is the main aim of the international conference “Volunteering for democracy” 2011 that will be held in Bydgoszcz (PL) on 8<sup>th</sup> July, organised as part of the European Year of Volunteering.

This conference, promoted jointly by ALDA and the Bydgoszcz City Hall, represents the launching event of the first Polish Presidency of the European Union for Kujawy and Pomerania Region. It will unite a prospected number of 150 representatives from civil society groups and local governments from all over Europe.

Keith Whitmore, President of the Congress of the Council of Europe, will participate and open the Conference and John Macdonald, Representative of the European Commission, Head of Task Force European Year of Volunteering, will contribute to the event addressing the audience through a video.

“The event of such kind – states the Mayor of Bydgoszcz, Mr. Rafał Bruski – is exactly what we need locally and regionally. A phenomenon of participation is what local community sees as democracy. The visible need to promote formal and non-formal levels of these activities is both: a task for and ambition of local authorities of Bydgoszcz. I am sure this experience will show a path and clear direction for public institutions and non-governmental organizations, that will be hosted during the conference “Volunteering for democracy” in Bydgoszcz.”

A Eurobarometer study in May 2010 revealed that 3 out of 10 Europeans claim to be active in a voluntary capacity.

“Wherever people help and support those in need – stated Mr. Per Vinther, ALDA President – society gains in cohesion and democracy. This is why ALDA and its members work to promote the active citizenship and the civil participation both in Member States and neighboring countries”.

The conference will include formal and non-formal participation, with the possibility to express a plan for the future engagement of civil society and of local authorities in Europe in



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the field of voluntarism. The structure of the event consists of a series of plenary sessions involving high-level speakers from the civil society sector and institutions. In moderated workshops, the participants will then identify best practices and methodologies to increase the democratic standards of their communities, also through the active involvement of volunteers. The recommendations drafted during the conference will play a considerable role for the policy making of the involved institutions and organizations.

Several projects will be presented as best practices and analyzed as possible facilitators of democratic and participative processes. The Polish civil society will be closely associated with the event.

The conference is part of a three-year VIT project (Very Important Twinning) – “Europe for Citizens” programme. The project envisages 20 international events.

The city of Bydgoszcz – a partner and co-organizer of the event – has sent invitations to representatives of 60 local organizations in order to lend a vote to all institutions which make an effort to introduce positive changes, wish to present their opinions, share their good practices, discuss and cooperate with public institutions.

For further information, please find attached the agenda of the event.

*2<sup>nd</sup> July 2011*

## **Press info**

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