

## **Mission report**

### **Mission members:**

Per Vinther, Executive President ALDA,  
Antonella Valmorbida, Director ALDA,  
Joseph Khakhaleishvili, Delegate LDA Georgia

**Dates:** 13th to 16th of March 2007

### **Objectives of the mission:**

- to meet the different stakeholders and partners for the LDA Georgia after the opening in September 2006
- to develop relations with the local partners in Kutaisi and to tackle the issue of the office premises
- to evaluate the work of the Delegate, Joseph Khakhaleishvili after the probation period

### **13th of March 2007:**

#### ⇒ **Meeting with Head of Urban Institute, Mr. Bill Krause**

We thanked him for the support given for the opening of LDA Kutaisi. We agreed to keep the contact for further activities in Kutaisi. He informed us about UI activities regarding women's rights and youth activities in the city and asked the Delegate to stay in touch with the local UI representative. He underlined the desirability to cooperate with the Academy for Local Government for whom they co-fund courses in Georgian language. Further training on local government issues should be provided and he would be pleased to have possible partnership on this issue. He confirmed that USAID is very interested in Human Trafficking and has a large project on it. The Delegate will keep the contact for local issues.

#### ⇒ **Meeting with the Ambassador of Italy, Fabrizio Romano**

We presented to him the activities of the LDA and the network of ALDA, as well as the presence of an Italian partner. The Ambassador expressed his wish to be kept informed of the activities in order to be able to establish synergies between different activities that he might know. The embassy does not have funding possibilities. Valmorbida stressed the fact that she would continue to lobby at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Italy for the project in Georgia. The Ambassador himself will be posted back to Rome in June. He promised to inform his successor about the LDA.

#### ⇒ **Meeting with Igor Gaon, Council of Europe Secretary General Representative in Georgia**

Mr Gaon presented to us the campaign organized by the Council of Europe against Human Trafficking. He suggested to the Delegate to organise with local CoE support a first event to promote the campaign, connected to the project submitted to the Austrian Development Agency or even as a single event. The Delegate will follow this.

#### ⇒ **Meeting with the European Commission Delegation, Per Eklund (Head) and project managers Maria Iarrera and Oliver Reisner**

Presentation of ALDA to EC Head of Delegation and relevant staff. We discussed possibilities of cooperation. The two project managers are well acquainted with the local situation, in particular on local government issues and on civil society. They requested to be kept informed about the follow-up and they are aware of the difficult situation of the local authorities in Kutaisi.

#### ⇒ **Meeting with National Association of Local Authorities Georgia (NALAG), David Melua, Executive Director**

We presented the current situation of the LDA Georgia. The Delegate had visited him a few days ago in the context of a project proposal to the EC Delegation. Mr Melua also suggested that NALAG be more involved with the LDA in the future for common projects. He suggested that LDA could be their focal point in the Imereti Region. He underlined how local governments are now assigned responsibilities without resources and capacities. It is important to focus on development of capacities of municipalities. There is a strong problem in the fiscal system. In some of the municipalities, the Secretary General of the local authorities is directly appointed by the Governor of Imereti Province, which obviously limits a lot the autonomy of the LGs.

### **14th of March, work in the office of the LDA**

#### ⇒ **Meeting in the City Hall.**

Meeting with the Vice Governor of the Imereti Province, Giga Shushania, and with the Mayor of Kutaisi, Niko Kachkachishvili. We presented to them the work of the LDA and ALDA and we underlined that we have a strategy of long term presence in the area. We reconfirmed the mandate of the Delegate and our support, which is backed by the large ALDA membership throughout Europe. We invited them to the meeting in Strasbourg and underlined the importance of their presence there. They confirmed their support for the agreement signed by the previous administration and committed themselves to find a solution for the premises to be presented at the partner meeting in Strasbourg. They asked for more transparency and info from the LDA. It is agreed with the Delegate that he will send by next week a first communication to the local partners followed by a monthly communication to local partners: Tbilisi and Kutaisi municipality, Young Lawyers association, Kutaisi Newport Association.

#### ⇒ **Meeting with the Young Lawyers Association (GYLA)**

GYLA presented their women's rights project and suggested a follow-up. Valmorbidia will get back to the donors (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland) for a possible follow-up. The Delegate will ask for a draft project from GYLA. We attended a very interesting training activity for young law students. GYLA confirmed their interest to take part in the partner meeting in Strasbourg.

#### ⇒ **Meeting with Kutaisi Newport Association**

We met Madonna Megrelishvili and some other members of KNA. She explained that she had little news of what the LDA is doing and that the visibility of the programme is not appropriate. The Delegate however reported that he had informed her of the activities. As for the visibility, he is keeping a low profile until the LDA has been properly registered. We agreed that Madonna and the KNA would be informed officially on a monthly basis of the activities of the LDA and be involved in activities when relevant. Madonna explained that a proposal for other premises had already been offered by the municipality but, with the proposal of the judge's house, they preferred to keep the LDA in that house. After the enlargement of the English language school, it was not possible any more. We were informed that the photographer from Newport visited Kutaisi without informing KNA. Subsequent investigation did not support this claim and the chair of NKA had emailed Madonna on 27 February to alert them to the visit

### **15th of March**

#### ⇒ **Visit to company in Batumi**

We visited the company in Batumi that had donated 5.000 Euro for the initial launch of the LDA. We asked for an additional donation of 50.000 Euro that were initially proposed but this was not seen as a firm commitment by the manager and we had to withdraw the proposal. Therefore, we agreed to make a project proposal on problem solving for local capacities including local government and civil society with the 5.000 Euro for 2007 that – anyway – are confirmed. The Delegate will make a project proposal, after consultation with the municipality, to be presented at the partners' meeting in Strasbourg.

#### ⇒ **Visit to Academy for Training Local Governments**

We met the Director of the Academy. The Academy is housed in a rather large building and the Delegate inquired about possible cooperation and use of premises should the municipality not be able to offer a solution. The Academy reports to the President's Office and the Ministry of Education. Evaluation of the first months of operations

#### ⇒ **Evaluation of Delegate**

Based on the three months probation period, the evaluation by ALDA is positive.

- The Delegate has followed with consistency his mandate and was in touch with ALDA staff on a daily basis.
- He started the first activities and organized the office (even in difficult situation) with equipment and staff.
- He kept in touch with the main stakeholders, with the difficulty of not having a defined registered statute.
- He managed properly the resources that were allocated to him by ALDA.
- He participated in the different training activities with a constructive approach.
- He tackled the issues with the appropriate carefulness on behalf of LDA and ALDA.
- He working on the question of the statute and is about to achieve a final solution to this.
- We have the feeling that he shares the team spirit of ALDA.
- He launched a first visibility campaign of the LDA (limited due to the problem of statute of the Agency).
- He reported regularly to ALDA and international partners about activities

Points to be improved:

- The Delegate took part in project drafting together with ALDA. He had good contacts at the local level. However, he needs further training in project drafting methodology.
- The visibility of the LDA is low due to the difficult position after the re-registration of the LDA. This visibility will need to be improved with a strategy with the media.
- It is agreed that he will report to the local partners of the activities and possible cooperation at least on a monthly basis.
- Publication of a newsletter (even on digital format).

ALDA confirmed its contract. A slight increase of the fees for him and the assistant is authorised in order to cover his expenses for social charges. A full report of the expenses and income will be presented at the partner meeting in Strasbourg.

*Strasbourg, 23rd of March 2007*