



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
Office in Minsk

**OSCE Office's project on Local Democracy opens new perspectives
for the Belarusian concept of self-governance**

MINSK, 2 December 2003 –The international seminar on *Conceptual Issues of the Development and Perfection of the System of Local Government and Self-Government* co-sponsored by the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Belarus and the OSCE Office in Minsk concluded the OSCE Office's project on *Local Democracy and Assistance to Local Government Development in Belarus*.

Within the framework of the project over the past few months four study tours took place in Lithuania, Poland, the Czech Republic and Latvia. Participants included representatives of the Belarusian local authorities nominated by both the Belarusian Foreign Ministry and the non-governmental organization Lev Sapega Foundation. The programmes for the tours were proposed by the Associations of the Local Governments of the receiving countries.

“The four study tours conducted in the neighbouring countries, as well as the Czech Republic, proved to be very useful. They provided the participants with an excellent opportunity to get first hand information and in-depth knowledge about the democratic principles of local government and self-government in the neighbouring countries. The final stage of the project, the international seminar, has served to sum up the experience gained during the study tours in the light of the new Belarusian concept of self-governance, which is being developed at present”,- said the Head of the OSCE Office in Minsk, Ambassador Eberhard Heyken.

The international seminar gathered the participants of the four study tours, other representatives of the relevant Belarusian structures, as well as experts from the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe, Council of Europe (Denmark, France, Germany, Poland, the Russian Federation and the UK) and from the neighbouring countries (Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Ukraine).

Functions and competences of local self-government, state administration on local level, local budget, economic regional development, territorial administration and effectiveness of self-government and other topical issues were discussed during the Seminar.

Academician Professor Piotr Nikitenko who has been actively involved in elaborating the Belarusian concept of self-governance pointed out: “The seminar has clearly demonstrated the interest of various participants in elaborating an up to dated concept for local governance in Belarus, which is a necessary condition for democratic achievements in any society”. Mr.Nikitenko highly appreciated the Office's efforts and productive co-operation with the Belarusian side.