

# Position of ALDA on the Conference on the Future of Europe and the Western Balkans involvement



Despite the current threats coming from Eastern Europe and Ukraine, **ALDA** confirms even more its commitment **to support democracy and citizens' engagement in the Balkans**, with local actions and in European perspective. We confirm the strategic and political stand of ALDA, enshrined in its Strategic plans 2021-2024, which consider essential to support the integration of the Balkans countries in the European Union.

ALDA is involved in the framework of the **Conference on the Future of Europe (CoFoE)** being member of the Civil society Convention for the Conference on the Future of Europe, which is a network of European Civil Society Organizations. ALDA coordinates the Democracy Cluster of the Civil Society Convention. ALDA also participates in activities on the fight against climate change and environmental challenges, Europe's digital transformation and the European Life. Since its establishment in 1999, ALDA is present in the **Balkans** with activities, members and partners as well as with the Local Democracy Agencies.

The **recommendations** resulting from the Regional Conference on the topic "European Union and the Western Balkans: Towards Renewed Trust" organised within the project Regional Youth Compact for Europe raised among others the importance that the Western Balkans are included in the Conference on the Future of Europe. The principle of "**leave no One behind**" and the Agenda 2030 could represent a compass for the integration process and approach for the upcoming years.

Therefore, ALDA through its Governing Board, Secretariat and Members Network appeal to the European Parliament, the Council and the European Commission, the civil society representatives, the Secretariat of the CoFoE and all other interested parties to take into consideration the following **recommendations:**

**1 Continue support for the integration of the countries of Western Balkans to the European Union** as a process of **democratization, stabilisation** and **peace** for the countries and communities in the region and for the EU member States. The EU perspective of the Western Balkans is even more important in times when the peace in (Eastern) Europe is at stake

**2 Contribute to further involvement of the youth from the Western Balkans in addressing key challenges such as socio-economic development of the region, democratic transformation in the WB countries and demographic changes.**

The WB youth has capacity to play a **transformative role** across societies in the region. Therefore, providing frameworks for their working together and voicing their concerns and priorities in the **reforms** towards the EU is needed.

On this road, the support, through programs and financial support for the **Youth Guarantee** as an important flagship of the Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans is needed so as **to support** increased regional mobility in education, youth employment opportunities, entrepreneurship development, social inclusion in order to prevent brain drain; **to develop** adequate formal and informal educational platforms for active citizenship; **to encourage** inter-cultural dialogue and understanding; providing accessible co-operation and learning platforms for youth to engage more effectively in democratic reforms and consultation process on EU integration perspective of the Western Balkans (references).[1]

From this perspective, we need to **continue promoting** the shared cultural heritage and history; respecting and supporting bilateral agreements; commemorate historical events. [2]

**3 Promote and develop cooperation between civil society and local authorities as an important tool for creating effective model in fostering the European integration in the Western Balkans.**

The fundamental principle of **democracy** is the involvement and participation of all segments of the local community in policymaking and its implementation. To ensure it, it is needed to formulate policy documents on **cooperation** between LAs and CSOs; encourage multilateral decentralized cooperation between WB and EU countries; setting standards in financing and monitoring procedures; support and promote active citizens participation on local level and establishing culture of **trust** between local authorities, civil society and citizens.[3]

**4 Foster and engage in strengthening regional cooperation,** reconciliation and good neighborhood relations reaffirms the EU committed of the WB countries and the EU members states.

**5 Continue the cooperation between the EU and the Western Balkans countries on the issue of migration, migration management and migrant's inclusion.**

Given the circumstances, we should continue working on this **joint challenge** and try to **intensify** border cooperation, creating multi-channel strategies, combining activity at the local, grassroots level and wide-reaching communication and information campaigns through traditional media and social media.[4]

**6 Maintain the EU support, partnership and solidarity by reinforcing the cooperation in different field such as health, economy and digitalization** in order to reduce negative socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 crisis in the Western Balkans countries.

**7 Establish various lines of cooperation in addressing climate change and in implementing energy transition.**

The region of the WB is heavily dependent on coal and therefore decarbonization and just transition is of the utmost importance. Exchange of **good practice** in the implementation of the EU Green Deal and the WB Green Agenda will bring valuable benefits for both EU and the WB.

We use this opportunity to highlight that we stay **committed** to promote the **European values** and principles and support the necessary reform processes in the Western Balkans region. We are moreover dedicated to foster **democracy, fundamental rights and the rule of law** through public debate and communication.

ALDA **empowers** Civil Society Organisations to increase their participation in decision-making making processes and to contribute to the European aspiration of the Western Balkans region. Furthermore, the regional dimension and the relative project-oriented approach are at the core of ALDA's strategies in the Western Balkans, in order **to assure** a closer cooperation between the European Union and the Western Balkan countries thus supporting the development of inclusive, fair and sustainable policies also towards their international relations with global actors.



## European Association for Local Democracy - ALDA

ALDA is a pan-European organization with headquarter office in Strasbourg dedicated to the promotion of **good governance** and **citizen participation** at the local level. ALDA is a key stakeholder in the field of local development in Europe and its Neighborhood. We were established in 1999 at the initiative of the Council of Europe to coordinate and support the network of Local Democracy Agencies (LDAs) in the Balkans.

Over the course of **20 years**, ALDA has worked with local stakeholders to build regional engagement and to connect **Balkan** local authorities and CSOs to the global strategy of ALDA. ALDA's main goal in Western Balkans is to support regional cooperation and EU integration processes in the Region. ALDA is **actively engaged** in all six Western Balkan Countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia.

ALDA has operational office in Skopje, North Macedonia since 2012 responsible for ALDA's development and presence in Western Balkans.

ALDA is coordinating 8 **Local Democracy Agencies (LDAs)** in 6 Western Balkan countries. Situated outside of city capitals, these LDAs play major role in promotion of local democracy in the Region. With long experience in management of multi-stakeholder's project and knowledge from work with direct beneficiaries.

ALDA has more than **35 members** (local authorities and civil society organizations) and wide network of partners from the 6 Western Balkan countries.

ALDA is founder and coordinator of the **Balkan Network for Local Democracy (BNLD)** with headquarters in Skopje, North Macedonia that has objective to enhance regional cooperation among the Western Balkan countries.



## Conference on the Future of Europe

The Conference of the Future of Europe (CoFoE) was launched in spring 2021 by the European Parliament, the Council and the European Commission and it will run until spring 2022. The **interactive digital platform** offers a unique way for European citizens to consider and discuss on Europe's challenges and priorities.

**[1] Project: CSOs for making local democracy works**

Document **„Co-operation between public Authorities and civil society At local level in republic of Macedonia“** ENG, MK, ALB, 2018

Publication **"Research on the Financial and Non-Financial Support of Civil Society Organizations by the Local Authorities"** ENG, MK, ALB, 2019

Video: **What is local Democracy:**

**Project: Decentralised cooperation Normandy – North Macedonia**

Publication **« La coopération décentralisée entre la Région Normandie et la République de Macédoine »**.(FR and MK)

**Project: Networking for Better Local Democracy in the Balkans**

**Participation in Policy/ Decision-Making Processes In the Western Balkans Challenges and Perspectives** (2021, ENG, ALB, MK, BHS)

**CSOs and Participation in Policy and Decision-Making Processes at the Local Level in the Balkans - Challenges and Perspectives** (2021, ENG, ALB, MK, BHS)

**Local Self-Government in the Western Balkans - Key Features and Attributes**.(2021, ENG, ALB, MK, BHS)

**Project: Publication Participation of the civil society organisations in cross-border cooperation** (2017, MK)

**Project: EU Fonds and the benefits for the Macedonian Municipalities** (2017,MK)

**[2] Project: Balkan Monumental 9 Trail**

**Project: Shared or Contested Heritage – Publication**.(2020, ENG)

**Project: Discover remembrance of the Macedonian Front of the First World War – Library**

**Project: The Rude Awakening** : A multimedia journey in the footsteps of frontline soldiers' everyday life

**[3]Project: Balkan regional platform for youth participation and dialogue**

**"Policy and Legislative Framework for Youth Participation in the Balkans"**, Comparative Overview and Analysis (2015)

**"Youth Mobility in the Western Balkans the present challenges and future perspectives"**, Comparative Overview and Analysis (2016)

**"YOUTH CULTURAL PARTICIPATION IN THE BALKANS"**, Research study (2017)

**YOUTH IN THE BALKANS:** Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Kosovo\*, Serbia, North Macedonia, COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS AND PRACTICE (2018)

**Youth leadership guide** (2018)

**Project: Regional Youth Compact for Europe**

Publication: Youth Compact comparative study on Civil Society in the Western Balkans and Involvement in the EU Accession Negotiation and EU Integration Processes from Initiatives to a Structured Dialogue, April 2019

EN: **COMPARATIVE STUDY - CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE WESTERN BALKANS: Involvement in the EU Accession Negotiation and EU Integration Processes from Initiatives to a Structured Dialogue** (PDF)

MK: **КОМПАРАТИВНА СТУДИЈА - ГРАЃАНСКОТО ОПШТЕСТВО ВО ЗАПАДЕН БАЛКАН: Учество во следење на процесот на пристапни преговори во ЕУ - од почетни иницијативи до воспоставен дијалог** (PDF)

RS: **KOMPARATIVNA STUDIJA - CIVILNO DRUŠTVO ZAPADNOG BALKANA: Praćenje pristupnih pregovora i EU integracije - od početnih inicijativa do izgrađenog dijaloga** (PDF)

AL: **STUDIM KRAHASUES - Përfshirja e shoqërisë civile në monitorimin e procesit të anëtarësimit në BE dhe procesin e integritit në BE në Ballkanin Perëndimor – prej projekteve fillestare deri dialogu i vendosur** (PDF)

Publication: **“Youth Transformative Potential in the EU Integration Processes and Post-COVID-19 Developments in the Western Balkans”** 2021 (ENG, MK, ALB, BHS)

**Project Report for the Regional Youth Compact for Europe**

Video: **Intercultural dialogue and understanding in the Western Balkans**

[4] Project: **"WELCOMING"** – International seminar on migration management held in Skopje

Project: **IMPACT - Inclusion Matters! Using Performing Arts towards Cohesion and Tolerance**

Publication: **IMPACT guidelines: social integration through performing arts**

**The promotional Video for Digital Education**