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Title: Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine signed the Association Agreement with the EU - Paving the way for local democracy and participation

The European Association for Local Democracy (ALDA) joins Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine in celebrating today's signature by these countries of the Association Agreements and provisions on Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas with the EU.

These agreements mark the beginning of a **much closer relationship with the European Union** – in terms of political association, economic integration but hopefully **also people-to-people contacts and civil society links**. Today's signatures represent the culmination of great reform efforts undertaken by Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine in the context of the Eastern Partnership – also in supporting the development of civil society and transparent decision-making.

ALDA has been working in the Eastern Partnership region since the mid-2000s to support local democracy, citizens' participation in local decision-making and effective cooperation between local authorities and Civil Society Organizations. These are the values widely shared by the European Union too. In fulfilling the Association Agreements and pursuing further integration of Eastern Partnership countries with the EU, **good governance and human rights should remain a priority**.

Only two days ago, ALDA held a partner meeting for the establishment of the **future Local Democracy Agency (LDA) in Dnipropetrovsk, Ukraine**, which would represent the third one in the Eastern Partnership - together with the LDA Armenia, in Gyumri, and the LDA Georgia, in Kutaisi. On that occasion, Volodymyr Peregudov, Deputy Chairman of the Dnipropetrovsk Regional Council, called for the agency to be set operational soon in order to open a dialogue between citizens and authorities. Today's news does not only represent a key step in the relationships between the three countries and the EU, but also a concrete act in **paving the way for local democracy and active citizens participation**.

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