



alda * *e* * European Association
for Local Democracy

ALDA ADVOCACY ACTIONS 2022



Citizens, Equality, Rights
and Values programme



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MESSAGE FROM OUR LEADERS



“Moving from the global to the regional level, always motivated by the will to encourage people, members and stakeholders in being protagonists of their societies, ALDA stimulated them in taking part in the CoFoE”

Oriano Otočan
ALDA President

“Ukraine is now defending the entire democratic world. We are a global alliance of local authorities and civil society to support good local governance and we stand with Ukraine”

Antonella Valmorbida
ALDA Secretary General



INTRODUCTION

Working for local democratic development means placing **people** and **local communities** at the centre of the **action**, while engaging with **stakeholders** and **institutions** for the implementation of **initiatives** that will foster and improve the **civic space** and **good governance**.

Yet, what actions can be taken in order to meet the above-mentioned objectives and support local initiatives?

Through a **participatory approach** and **multilateral decentralised cooperation**, ALDA empowers its members and partners to be **change-makers** and **democracy-promoters** within their living spaces. Thus, the accreditation received by the Council of Europe to lead the implementation of the “ELOGE” label in North-Macedonia, Croatia and Kosovo*, is a further testimony of this commitment.

In addition, in order to better target and tackle the several challenges posed at global level, but which find answers at the local one, ALDA’s strategy has been developed through **transversal horizontal actions**, by linking together **two variables**:

Regional areas

- Europe
- Western Balkans
- Middle East and Africa
- Eastern Partnership, Russia and Central Asia

Thematic Hubs

- Environment and Climate;
- Citizens Engagement;
- Gender, Inclusion and Human Rights;
- Youth Empowerment and Education;
- Migration
- Territorial & Local Development
- Digital & Innovation

Besides, the Association has promptly reacted to European opportunities; and global challenges. Of course, for the time being, and as stressed several times by both ALDA President, Mr. Otočan, as well as ALDA Secretary General, Ms. Valmorbidia, ALDA closely followed the Conference on the Future of Europe; and it is currently playing a key role in the reconstruction of Ukraine, by cooperating with Local Authorities and Civil Society Organisations.

Overall, this publication is willing to collect all the different actions done by ALDA during the 2022, thus providing a more comprehensive picture of the whole mission of the Association.

CHAPTER I

“ALDA THEMATIC HUBS: PUBLICATION AND ACTIONS”

ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE

Not only at European level but also at Global one, **environment** represents a **strategic priority** to be addressed. More in detail, the **European Green Deal** is intended to turn Europe into the **first climate-neutral continent by 2050**.

“Protecting the environment is a collective responsibility. With ALDA, in fact, we are working to implement concrete actions to tackle climate change and achieve global goals, through the active involvement of citizens, Local Authorities, public institutions and international stakeholders” stated **Valeria Fantini** - Environment and Climate Hub Coordinator.

Hence, recalling what just stated, the United Nations, in the framework of the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, do consider the **environment** as a **key factor** in its long-term strategy.

On its side, ALDA localises the above-mentioned **priorities** into **actions**, closer to citizens and local communities, by developing its initiatives focusing on:

Climate change adaptation and mitigation in urban and rural areas

Flood risk mitigation and soil conservation

Information and environmental governance

Biodiversity conservation

Sustainable agri-food systems



From a general standpoint, as it happened already during the COP26, in the occasion of the **COP27, which took place in Sharm El-Sheikh (Egypt)**, ALDA contributed with several **initiatives** to meet the **goals** of the Conference itself. Besides, as a partner of the “Climate of Change” Project, the Association has been able to **advocate** on **climate actions** to take, in regard to climate induced migration.

Specifically, 5 youth ambassadors delivered the “Climate of Change” Project petition, entitled “**End climate change, start #ClimateOfChange!**” and signed by more than 150.000 signatures, to the policy-makers joining the COP27. Surely enough, youth are among the main protagonists of the future, especially when it comes to climate and environment. Therefore, they also represent major stakeholders and target groups to empower.

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Yet, one question may be: how to do so? **How can young people be empowered?**

One example may be through training, as happened at the “**Pomme de terre en fête**” Festival in Plœuc l’Hermitage (France), during which 60 young people joined the mini-democracy school, discussing European Union values and environmental issues. This confirmed also what stressed Jorrit Kiewik - Executive Director of Slow Food Youth Network - during the podcast episode on Food Sustainability - who believes that “*many young social movements feel this urgency in order to make a change within our world*”.

On the one hand, training does represent a necessity in terms of knowledge sharing and awareness raising; on the other hand mapping and defining common practices at European level is equally vital in order to provide a coherent and united response to climate change. The “Database of initiatives working on Green Deal topics in Europe”, developed by the Shared Green Deal project, for instance, serves exactly this matter: gathering the initiatives related to the Green Deal and the organisations and/or institutions promoting them. The idea of creating interlinked systems increases the possibility of further actions and research.



BEWARE - Underdrained bioretention rain garden



Following the very same idea of building interconnected systems of knowledge, ALDA has been engaged on the definition of common standard skills-recognition within the forestry sectors. Thus, conscious of the role played by forests as the lungs of the planet, the international debate on the competences and skills for forestry workers mainly focused on technical, legislative and sustainability levels.

The latter two are particularly relevant as they aimed at harmonising the rules, while defining more innovative approaches in the sector. Similarly, the Association was active in the definition of Natural Water Retention Measures to respond to **extreme weather phenomena**.

Overall, the Association has set **environment and sustainability** at the core of its strategic plan 2020-2024, representing one of its pivotal points. By constantly collaborating with local, regional and international stakeholders ALDA is contributing to the implementation of the **EU Green Deal** and **UN Agenda 2030**.

Publications

Project	Subject/Title
BEWARE	<u>BEWARE Solution Manual</u>
BEWARE	<u>BEWARE “Laymans Report”</u>
CAP-PERI	<u>“Magic guide to foster sustainable development”</u>



FOREST [Booklet “Towards an European standard forestry curricula”](#)

FOOD WAVE [Democracy & Food Sustainability_ \(Podcast\)](#)

Events

Project	Subject/Title
SHARED GREEN DEAL	<u>A database of initiatives working on Green Deal topics in Europe</u>
BEWARE	<u>Training Online Nature Based Solutions</u>
HUB	<u>Environment, people habits and biodiversity at the centre of ALDA's projects at TNOC festival</u>
LIMITS TO GROWTH	<u>Energy Cities Forum 2022 Brussels</u>
CLIMATE OF CHANGE	<u>European Service Civic Festival – Workshop on Climate Change</u>
REAL DEAL	<u>Civil Society Forum for Sustainability – Shaping the European Green Deal</u>
CLIMATE OF CHANGE	<u>“Festival Les Solidarités” and “Le Village des Associations” for the #ClimateOfChange campaign</u>
HUB	<u>“La Pomme De Terre En Fête” in Plœuc-L’Hermitage</u>
HUB	<u>Week of Regions and Cities 2022 workshop “Together empowering Youth for climate action”</u>
CLIMATE OF CHANGE	<u>Stand Up for a Climate of Change</u>
HUB	<u>COP27: ALDA's active commitment to the planet, its species and people</u>

CITIZENS ENGAGEMENT

Since the beginning of its activities back in 2000, ALDA placed local communities at the epicentre of its mission, focusing on the needs and aspirations of citizens.

Through participatory processes the Association engaged with people in four different ways, be they information, consultation, dialogue and partnership; all of them accurately explained in the publication entitled "Participatory plan for local communities focused on citizens".



From a general perspective, participatory democracy is based on the milestone according to which citizens' engagement is ensured in the decision making processes. This means that certain principles have to be taken into account, such as: respect among all the actors; independence of the NGOs; transparency; non discrimination & inclusiveness. This last point, in particular, will be further analysed in the next section.

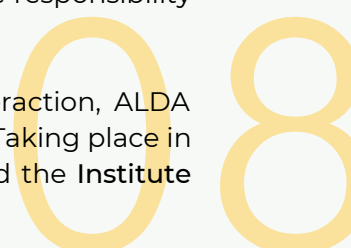
As per definition a community results from different individuals that share together some characteristics and/or live in the same place. Therefore, in a more structured community this implies a system of government, within which representatives are given the authority to conduct affairs and actions. In addition, when it comes to a democratic system, representatives are elected by the very same community and are involved in the decision making process.

Within this theoretical framework, one should also place the capacity building activities to Local Authorities on good governance and citizens engagement, which ALDA conducted in Algeria, training 245 Chefs Daïra¹, thus supporting local participative democracy and social accountability. The strategic presence of ALDA in the mediterranean was also underlined by the participation in the annual meeting of the Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly (ARLEM), which took place in Izmir (Türkiye) focusing on resilient cities and urbanism.

Back to social accountability, the latter is strictly related to civic engagement, since it understates the active involvement of citizens, or single individuals, in relation to the actions taken by representatives. In other words it is the duty of "power-holders" to take responsibility towards the community.

Based on the expertise in engagement of LDAs and support of citizens' interaction, ALDA participated at the Academy on Participatory Democracy as expert and trainer. Taking place in Belgrade (Serbia), the Academy was carried out with the Council of Europe and the Institute for Philosophy and Social Theory.

¹ Daira: administrative unit, similar to a district



Tackling the topic of community engagement from another perspective, in order to make a step forward, and thus create a fruitful democratic network, ALDA joined the “European Capital of Democracy” initiative, which aimed at building partnership among cities in order to foster citizen participation. Hence, by encouraging people to take actions, it is likely that not only will the community reach a higher level of democracy; but also it will generate more growth, a more equal and just society, fostering freedoms.

Cities, in fact, represent the place within which a certain community may find the ground to flourish and express itself. This is why, ALDA encourages the exchange of practices and knowledge among metropolitan cities in terms of the use of cohesion funds to support and boost citizens’ engagement.

Readers may notice how so far the discussion mainly revolved around the principle of “participatory democracy”. Nonetheless, ALDA was also engaged in the mechanism and debate on “direct democracy”, which requires the active involvement of people also in terms of deciding, through voting systems, on policies and laws.

Hence, in September 2022, ALDA Secretary General, Antonella Valmorbida, took part in the Global Forum on Modern Direct Democracy, signing the “Magna Charta” identifying 20 pillars to progress in the democratic path at local level. Among them, one can find:

- ▶ **Social movements as engines of democracy:**
promoting exchanges between people and social movements;
- ▶ **Enforcement and transparency:**
sufficient resources to implement citizens' decisions and monitor their implementation;
- ▶ **Representation of the under-represented:**
protection of minorities, equality;
- ▶ **A voice for young people:**
a genuine democratic voice for young people.



Overall, the actions that the Association is taking have to be understood as an unicum addressing its very own mission.

Publications

Project	Subject/Title
HUB	<u>ALDA's Working Groups and Regional Offices</u>
HUB	<u>Participatory plan for local communities focused on citizens</u>
HUB	<u>Sister-Cities Partnerships: Subnational Actors in the Cooperation between the People's Republic of China and the Republic of North Macedonia</u>
P-CUBE	<u>Democracy & Decision Making Processes (Podcast)</u>

Events

Project	Subject/Title
HUB	<u>Online seminar on the role of women in public space in Libya and Tunisia</u>
HUB	<u>Sommet des villes et des régions - side event Anna Lindh Foundation</u>
HUB	<u>Transatlantic Relations Follow-up Committee</u>
LINK 4 COOPERATION	<u>Forum for sharing best practices of CSOs and LAs cooperation</u>
HUB	<u>ALDA joins AGORA</u>
HUB	<u>Convention of Rights on the Mediterranean Sea</u>
CAMELOT	<u>Networking on Cohesion Funds applied to Metropolitan Cities</u>

Project	Subject/Title
HUB	<u>ALDA at the 42nd Congress Session</u>
THE:PLACE	<u>THE:PLACE – 5 days intensive training in Istanbul</u>
HUB	<u>Civil Society Exchange Partnership Program Closing Meeting</u>
HUB	<u>Democracy at a tipping point?</u>
HUB	<u>Turkey Europe Future Forum in Istanbul</u>
HUB	<u>The European Local Coalition</u>
HUB	<u>For a federal Europe, sovereign and democratic – The time is now!</u>
HUB	<u>Turkey – Europe Civil Society Forum</u>
HUB	<u>Academy on Participatory Democracy in Belgrade</u>
HUB	<u>Road to Global Forum 2022: going digital through challenges and opportunities</u>
HUB	<u>RAI3 Interview regional news “TG Regione”</u>
HUB	<u>ALDA+ at the EDD 2022: building new partnerships and inspiring innovative solutions to pressing global challenges</u>
HUB	<u>Réseau EuroMed France Meeting in Marseille</u>
HUB	<u>Regional Capacity building and Networking seminar in Novi Sad</u>



Project	Subject/Title
HUB	<u>Diventiamo Cittadini Europei – Award Ceremony</u>
HUB	<u>ALDA at the launch event of the Istanbul Vision 2050 Plan: responding to the challenges of globalisation with concrete policies</u>
HUB	<u>Participative deliberative democracy at the core of the training in Tunisia</u>
HUB	<u>Democracy needs you: join the citizens' jury of the "European Capital of Democracy"</u>
HUB	<u>International Seminar in Ventotene – Altiero Spinelli" Institute of Federalist Studies</u>
HUB	<u>ALDA signed the Magna Charta of the Global Forum on Modern Direct Democracy.</u>
HUB	<u>"International Democracy Day 2022" hosted by the Committee of the Regions in Brussels</u>
HUB	<u>"Promoting Democracy through Local Authorities"</u>
HUB	<u>"World Peace Forum" in Caen – France</u>
HUB	<u>Shaping the future of Eastern Partnership. Together with IDEA International: the democratic agenda and the future of the region</u>
HUB	<u>"2022 Global Forum on Modern Direct Democracy"</u>
HUB	<u>Week of Regions and Cities 2022</u>

Project	Subject/Title
HUB	<u>European Mouvement General Assembly on “Culture: Cement of the European Union”</u>
HUB	<u>ARLEM annual meeting in Türkiye: cities and sustainability at the centre</u>
HUB	<u>World Forum for Democracy 2022 – Democracy: A New Hope?</u>
EuScepticOBS	<u>EuScepticOBS is to avoid further political polarization within EU societies</u>
HUB	<u>Capacity building activities in Algeria, closing 2022 with 245 Heads of Diara trained</u>
HUB	<u>EaP Civil Society Forum – 14 Annual Assembly</u>
Scintilla	<u>Training on E-democracy and BePart Forum presentation</u>
HUB	<u>ALDATalk on EU Parliamentary Elections</u>

GENDER, INCLUSION & HUMAN RIGHTS

Why address Gender, Inclusion, and Human Rights within one single hub? How far are those three thematically related?

From a general perspective, **people's social identities can overlap**, creating compounding experiences of **discrimination**; therefore the Hub, based on an Intersectional Approach, is intended to conceive and consider the person in its entirety.



Furthermore, one of ALDA's key values is **Anti Discrimination**, and if one unfolds this concept, one may realise that this means combating discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation through inclusion: thus, the strong bond among the three topics. As mentioned for the Environment and Climate, the United Nations 17 Sustainable Development Goals tackle also these matters, more in details one can recall "SDG 5 - GENDER EQUALITY: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls" and "SDG 10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES: Reduce inequality within and among countries".

Moving from the international stage to a more European one, the principle of Anti Discrimination stands as a milestone principle in several policies and actions, among them the [Gender Equality strategy 2020-2025](#), and the [Anti-Racism Action Plan 2020-2025](#).

"I want Europe to finally become a continent of equal opportunities for men and women. And I know we are not there yet. I know that the playing field is not level yet" stated President von der Leyen on the occasion of the International Women's Day. "I know from experience" - she continued - "that women have to work twice as hard to get the same salary, the same recognition or the same leadership position as their male colleagues. I know the obstacles and the prejudices."



Recently, ALDA turned Ms. von der Leyen words into facts. Practically speaking, the work of the Hub culminated with the publication, in November 2022, of the ALDA Policy on "[Gender Equality and Anti Discrimination](#)".

This document represents the position of the Association in terms of recruitment and career progression, as well as partnership, membership, suppliers and beneficiaries. In other words, the idea is to use the policy as a **comprehensive tool**, which encourages those stakeholders engaged with ALDA to follow the policy, thus contributing, in a more broader scale, to the implementation of the policy. In order to effectively achieving its objectives, the Hub has been divided into further sub thematic, which may be summarised as follow:

- ▶ Disability
- ▶ LGBTQIA+ rights
- ▶ Gender Equality
- ▶ Media Representation
- ▶ Prevent GBV
- ▶ Sexual Education and Reproductive Rights
- ▶ Political and Institutional representation
- ▶ Economic Empowerment
- ▶ Fight Hate Crime and Hate Speech
- ▶ Gender and climate change

Furthermore, ALDA is now closely following the [European Institute for Gender Equality \(EIGE\)](#) decision to establish itself as the **EU knowledge centre for gender equality**. Overall, the Association has implemented several projects addressing the core thematic of the Hub, be they [GET UP](#) and [WOM-COM](#) as far as the Gender Equality concerns; and [STAND UP](#), [MOVING ON](#), [EXTRA-C](#) and [INCLUDEDATE](#) when discussing around Anti Discrimination and Inclusion.

Publications

Project	Subject/Title
HUB	Democracy & Hate Speech (Podcast episode 10)
HUB	Gender Equality & Anti-Discrimination Policy (2022) .
LET'S CAMPAIGN	Handbook Let's Campaign

Events

Project	Subject/Title
STAND UP	"Defining Hate Crime" STAND UP seminar at European Parliament
HUB	#BeInclusive EU sport Awards 2022

YOUTH EMPOWERMENT & EDUCATION

Based on the [Eurostat data](#) published in November 2022, as of 1 January 2021, **16.3% of the EU's total population was represented by young people** (aged 15-29 years). Even though the ratio is meant to decrease, and youth are projected to account to less than 15% by 2050, still there are some places, especially university cities and urban areas, where young people represent $\frac{1}{4}$ of the whole population.

Besides the general trends, what is crucial is the **recognition of youth as the generation of tomorrow, as future change-makers**. Yet, before considering the rationale and the thematic priorities, one may wonder how to address youth. A first answer may be found in the toolkit entitled "[Communication Campaign for a Young and Inclusive Placemaking](#)", published by PART-Y project, according to which listening and meeting young people's expectations represents a successful way to engage with them.

Hence, through an holistic approach, the Hub on Youth Empowerment and Education is intended to develop synergies with cross-sectoral projects; create and develop actions with youth workers and the whole education sector; while brainstorming on new ideas and future proposals.

"[Festival Théâtres Nomades](#)" marks one of the ideal occasions to exchange and reflect on youth. Invited by Anna Lindh Foundation, ALDA joined the Festival in August 2022, thus benefiting from this moment open to NGOs and associations, to share their missions and projects in a recreational way.



From a more general point of view, the Hub addressed not only the related SDGs of the United Nations, but it is also aimed at **implementing the guidelines and policies** developed within the Union.

Among them, one can find the 11 **European Youth Goals** (see picture on the left) of the **Strategy 2019-2027**, which stands on three pillars: **Engage, Connect, Empower**.

Recently, the European Commission welcomed the **agreement** between the **Council** and the **European Parliament** on "**2022: European year of Youth**", which foresees young generations as key players in three main realms:



Digital transition



Green transition



Social inclusion

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Therefore, the Hub developed **four lines of actions**, based on which it aims to turn into actions both the EU Youth Strategy, and the guidelines and principles addressed in the UN Agenda 2030, summarised as follow:



Young people and digital transition:

fostering **education opportunities** to strengthen youngsters' hard and soft skills; promoting interactive, digital and dynamic **tools** to proactively empower young citizens, to prevent social exclusion and to ensure digital accessibility and inclusiveness (i.e. the so-called "digital transition for all"); promoting **virtual reality** as a tool to enhance social interaction;



Young people and green transition:

raising **awareness**, bettering **education** and **knowledge** as far as climate, energy and environment priorities concern, while exchanging good practices;



Young people and social inclusion:

supporting young people through **youth work**, with particular attention to **disadvantaged groups** (NEETs, returnees, young women, young migrants, etc) and young people living in rural areas not to be left behind, to provide them with relevant skills and knowledge, to make them aware and active citizens, to raise their awareness on social and economic issues, and to benefit from existing mobility, job, and formal and non-formal education opportunities;



Young people and civic engagement:

supporting **active participation** in their communities and in the decision-making process at local, national and international level, by collaborating with local authorities, CSOs, NGOs.

Publications

Project	Subject/Title
DESIRE	<u>DESIRE e-book on Schuman Declaration (2022).</u>
RADEX	<u>Research findings on youth radicalisation: RADEX comprehensive report</u>
PART-Y	<u>PART-Y TOOLKIT to build a Communication Campaign for a Young and Inclusive Placemaking</u>
H.E.Y!	<u>Democracy & Youth (Podcast episode 6)</u>

Events

Project

Subject/Title

PART-Y

New European Bauhaus Festival with PART-Y

HUB

Theatre des Nomades



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MIGRATION

When discussing the macro topic of migration, the institutions at European level have taken several measures, from the Dublin Regulation just to mention probably the most well-known one, to the latest “New Pact on Migration and Asylum”.

The latter, delivered in 2020, considers the idea of promoting a new governance mechanism for a fairer separation and/or division of responsibilities among Member States. From a general perspective, if it is true that these decisions have to be followed by Member States; on the other hand if one narrows down the issue, the CSOs and the NGOs play a role in this realm.

In light of this, the podcast on “Democracy & Migration”, which hosted Mr. Rilievo, ALDA Governing Board Member, as special guest, was also intended to investigate the nexus and the cooperation among these two players.

The push factors that make a person leaving its own place may be several, among them one can identified:



On the other hand, the pull factors represent a key reason, motivating the individual to embark on its journey towards Europe. Hence, the latter represents for many the land of possibilities, of future and of self-expression.

Yet, when discussing this phenomenon the debate is quite heated; some people perceive it as an opportunity, others as a threat. For sure, integration in the arrival communities may be difficult, and migrants may suffer from marginalisation and exclusion, as highlighted during the final conference of the MIICT project - ICT Enabled Public Services for Migration.



Being engaged in several projects and initiatives, ALDA has advocated for the inclusion and integration of migrants in the hosting communities, as promoted through the EPIC Project, while working on recommendations and policy papers to be shared at institutional levels, based on the research and feedback gathered locally.

With the engagement and collaboration with its members and partners, the Thematic Hub on Migration is willing to further dialogue and exchange on the matter, while providing concrete inputs useful for the implementation and development of the European Agenda on Migration.

Hence, the Association is working for a coordinated and coherent action, to be pursued by different actors - be they the government institutions, civil society organisations and local authorities - at different levels.

All in all, the goal is to ensure migrants access to the basic facilities, from healthcare, to education in both transit and host countries.

Publications

Project	Subject/Title
3STEPS	<u>Outlining evidenced-based policy recommendations for the integration and inclusion of young migrants and refugees - Policy Brief 3STEPS</u>
HUB	<u>Democracy & Migration (Podcast episode 12)</u>

Events

Project	Subject/Title
PERCEPTIONS	<u>Launch of the PERCEPTIONS web platform, directed both at policymakers and first-line practitioners working with migrants</u>
MIICT	<u>Co-creating ICT solutions to aid migrant integration: challenges, solutions & sustainability</u>
PERCEPTIONS	<u>PERCEPTIONS Project – Joint Policy Roundtable</u>
EUScepticOBS	<u>Euroscepticism at the gates of Europe International Conference in Trieste</u>
EPIC	<u>The narrative of a human-based system to welcome refugees from Ukraine: EPIC Project webinar</u>
EPIC	<u>“Solidarity with Ukraine - Testimonies of war”</u>

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CHAPTER II

“ALDA: A STRATEGIC STAKEHOLDER IN EUROPE AND BEYOND”

ALDA FOR UKRAINE

“Despite all the escalation in the recent months, it is still hard to contemplate that a full-scale war started in the middle of the European continent. We call for the EU to continue having an even more engaged role to end the military invasion of Ukraine and start a peace process”. With these words, the ALDA Governing Board expressed itself through its statement right at the beginning of the war in Ukraine, on 24th February 2022.

From that onwards, the **commitment** of the Association for people, friends and colleagues in Ukraine became even more **intense**, with the establishment of a **dedicated unit**, in charge of daily exchange with those experiencing the atrocities of the Russian invasion.

Hence, in order to better understand the upcoming initiatives, it is worth quickly providing a background in terms of **ALDA’s presence in the Country**. From a general standpoint, ALDA coordinates and supports the network of **16 Local Democracy Agencies (LDAs)**, which are recognized by the Congress as an instrument for promoting city diplomacy, and whose actions and projects target the **local dimension** and the **needs of citizens**.

The very first LDA in Ukraine was established in **2015** in the **Dnipropetrovsk Region**, standing as a platform of cooperation, dialogue and exchange of experiences and best practices on regional development. Two years later, in **2017**, the Local Democracy Agency Mariupol was established, with the aim of implementing democracy best-practices in Mariupol in order to develop a productive dialogue between the community and the local government.

In light of this, one can place the overall action of the Association *“calling for the EU to continue having an even more engaged role to end the military invasion of Ukraine and start a peace process”*, as underlined by ALDA President - Mr. Otočan - at the Governing Board meeting in Trieste on 4th March 2022.



Considering the necessity of addressing the whole support to Ukraine as a coherent action based on a multi-stakeholder approach, ALDA organised a conference to support the Local Democracy Agencies in Ukraine, while working for the establishment of new ones. Hence, if on the one hand, the action needs to involve a plethora of **stakeholders**; on the other hand it should also be in line with the **Ukrainian aspirations towards Europe**, as recalled by **Bruno Julian Hamm – Pütt**, from the Konrad Adenauer Foundation in Kyiv, who stressed the importance *“to support the European path, to show the economic future while supporting the Local Democracy Agencies in Ukraine”*.

From support to reconstruction: in the second half of 2022, the ALDA strategy towards Ukraine tackled this latter aspect. What are the next steps? How can institutions and CSOs cooperate with Local Authorities and citizens to overcome the challenges posed by the war?

These were among the crucial aspects discussed in Liberec (Czech Republic), right after the 11th annual meeting of the CORLEAP, when “*the four levels of the reconstruction have been represented: the international one; the national one; the one of the local municipalities and that of citizens*” were present at the meeting, to further encourage a multi-stakeholder and pluri-dimensional actions toward Ukraine - as stressed by Petr Gandalovič, Director of Department of Development Aid, Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Czech Republic.

Echoing this meeting, the ALDA President, Mr. Otočan, exchanged on post-conflict management, based on the expertise of ALDA gained at the aftermath of the war in the Western Balkans, at the high-level conference entitled “Development Cooperation for Democracy: the role of local governments and civil society. A multistakeholder tool to support Ukraine”, which was held in Wroclaw (Poland) and organised by Regional Representation of the European Commission in Wroclaw and the College of Eastern Europe.

The above mentioned are just few highlights of the campaign, entitled #ALDAforUkraine, that the Association developed since the beginning of the war. Benefitting from its great number of followers, ALDA gave visibility to the campaign also on social media, with the idea of raising awareness on the current situation in Ukraine.



Publications

Project - activity	Subject/Title
ALDA	<u>Statement on Ukraine - Russia</u>
ALDA	<u>Statement "The Governing Board of ALDA condemns the Russian invasion of Ukraine"</u>
ALDA	<u>ALDA Governing Board statement on the "Russian exclusion from the Council of Europe"</u>
ALDA	<u>Statement "Enlarging Europe for a better Europe Let's celebrate the new candidates and let's not forget the others!"</u>

Events

Project - activity	Subject/Title
ALDA	<u>Support to "Shelter Project"</u>
ALDA	<u>Support to ALDA Members acting for Ukraine</u>
ALDA	<u>ALDA and the LDAs united to support Ukraine</u>
ALDA	<u>Building fruitful partnerships: ALDA and CEI for the future of Europe and the Balkans (MoU signature ceremony).</u>
ALDA	<u>Support of Ukraine at the center of ALDA Governing Board in March at CEI Headquarters</u>
ALDA	<u>The Eastern front: the Russian invasion of Ukraine</u>
ALDA	<u>Congress' meeting to coordinate its network of local authorities to support Ukraine</u>
ALDA	<u>European Mayors in action to end the war in Europe</u>
ALDA	<u>The narrative of a human-based system to welcome refugees from Ukraine: EPIC Project webinar</u>

ALDA	<u>ALDATalk “Update from the Local Democracy Agencies and ALDA’s members in Ukraine, actions and strategy on Ukraine’s emergency”</u>
ALDA	<u>La guerra in Ucraina -Il mondo di domani</u>
ALDA	<u>“Solidarity with Ukraine - Testimonies of war”</u>
ALDA	<u>BUK Festival & Testimonies from Ukraine</u>
ALDA	<u>“Fundraising for Ukraine” & EPD General Assembly</u>
ALDA	<u>AER Ukraine - Regional and Local Initiatives for Support and Exchange</u>
ALDA	<u>Joined forces to support the work of LDAs in Ukraine. What’s next? (Donors Conference).</u>
ALDA	<u>European integration after the war: What’s next for Eastern Partnership" at College of Europe Summer Academy</u>
ALDA	<u>The war in Ukraine and different shades of Euroscepticism</u>
ALDA	<u>Multi-stakeholder approach for the reconstruction of Ukraine: ALDA, the CORLEAP and the Czech Presidency.</u>
ALDA	<u>Places have a meaning: ALDA Governing Board in Poland for Ukraine</u>
ALDA	<u>Wroclaw Declaration: European institutions and Civil Society Organisations together for Ukraine</u>
ALDA	<u>‘RebuildUkraine’ & Civil Dialogue – High Level Conference</u>

ALDA FOR THE CONFERENCE ON THE FUTURE OF EUROPE (CoFoE)

Every year, on 9th May people in the Union celebrate “Europe Day”. This very same day, in 2022, marked the closing ceremony of the “Conference of the Future of Europe” (CoFoE), possibly known as the most recent and important bottom-up exercise allowing citizens to have their say on the future of Europe.

Starting from the beginning, ALDA actively joined this opportunity both as a strategic player within the Civil Society Convention for the Conference on the Future of Europe, by signing the Joint Civil Society Declaration; and as amplifiers of citizens' voices.

Benefitting from its structured dialogue with several European institutions, such as the European Commission, while being an emanation of the Council of Europe, ALDA Secretary General was among the 8 representatives of civil society at the 4th plenary of the Conference on the Future of Europe.

At the same time, being present in several neighbouring countries, ALDA started a reflection on the relation among the CoFoE and the **Western Balkan region**. Debates, ideas-sharing and exchanges culminated in seven recommendations, listed in the publication entitled “Position of ALDA on the Conference on the Future of Europe and the Western Balkans involvement”.

Hence, ALDA called for “*support for the integration of the countries of Western Balkans to the European Union as a process of democratisation, stabilisation and peace*” and **youth involvement** as well explained in the first two recommendations.



Similarly, in charge with ECOLISE of the “**Democracy Cluster**” within the Civil Society Convention on the Future of Europe, ALDA analysed **people’s engagement**, while urging for their involvement and participation to guarantee a high qualitative social development. Hence, as reiterated during the Plenary in Strasbourg (France) on 11th March 2022, ALDA advocated for **citizens’ participation**, to reduce the gap between **institutions** and **people** for the Europe of tomorrow.

Overall, as mentioned above, on 9th May 2022 the closing ceremony of the Conference on the Future of Europe, served as the occasion to gather the CSOs delegates, and present the 49 recommendations collected and listed in the "Report of the final outcome", which was given to the high representatives of the European institutions: President of the European Parliament **Roberta Metsola**, President **Emmanuel Macron** on behalf of the Council Presidency and President of the European Commission **Ursula von der Leyen**.

Finally, being ALDA a membership based network, a dedicated "ALDATalk" was organised in June 2022 to share with members on the achievement and next actions to take, since as highlighted by the three speakers it is **crucial to monitor the follow up of the CoFoE**, while engaging citizens in the decision-making and protection of the civic space.²

Publications

Project - activity	Subject/Title
ALDA	<u>Position of ALDA on the Conference on the Future of Europe and the Western Balkans involvement</u>
ALDA	<u>Europe and its next steps: ALDA for the Conference on the Future of Europe</u>

Events

Project - activity	Subject/Title
ALDA	<u>Time to turn recommendations into facts: ALDA at the fourth plenary of the CoFoE</u>
ALDA	<u>Conference future of Europe – civil society convention presentation</u>
ALDA	<u>Plenary session – Conference on the Future of Europe</u>
ALDA	<u>ALDA at closing ceremony of the CoFoE</u>
ALDA	<u>ALDATalk on the conclusions of the Conference on the Future of Europe</u>
ALDA	<u>Endorsement of the Civil Society Convention into the Plenary of the CoFoE</u>

² Speakers: Antonella Valmorbidia, ALDA Secretary General and member of the steering committee of the the Civil Society Convention for the Conference on the Future of Europe, Alexandrina Najmowicz, Secretary General of the European Civic Forum (FCE) and co-chair of the Civil Society Convention for the Conference on the Future of Europe and Hervé Moritz, Vice-Président Le Mouvement Européen – France Alsace and Spokesperson, Union of European Federalists France (UEF)

ALDA FOR ELOGE - THE EUROPEAN LABEL OF GOVERNANCE EXCELLENCE

At the initiative of the Council of Europe (CoE) ALDA was established, as an “umbrella organisation”, to coordinate and support the LDAs network. Besides, it also cooperates with the Council as far as the “European Label of Governance Excellence” (ELOGE) concerns. Accredited by the CoE for the implementation of the local governance assessment - developed in 12 principles - in the Balkans, ALDA Skopje Office was engaged in North Macedonia, Croatia and Kosovo*.

From a general standpoint, the tasks that the Association is may be summarised in four main aspects:



Support

Supporting the organisation of workshop for the subscribing municipalities in order to prepare the implementation at local level;



Prepare

Prepare the supporting material to meet the benchmark;



Draft

Drafting questionnaires, available on an online platform, and favouring the local dissemination, as well as the analysis of the data collected;



Elaborate

Elaborating the final evaluation, which focuses on the definition of guidelines for evaluation methodology; and the creation of Evaluation committee.

More in detail, concerning **Croatia**, a **training session** for trainers was organised in March and May of 2022, with the support of the consultancy Company from Croatia RAVECON: the whole project culminated with the **award** of three municipalities. Yet, as recalled by Mr. Otočan at the launching event, if on the one hand Croatia has reached a certain level of **expertise and maturity**; still there are still difficulties that persist. Following the same path, also municipalities from **North Macedonia** took part in the ELOGE programme. Launched in November 2021, with the presence of Mr. Eli Chakar from the Ministry of Local Self-Government; Mr. Emir Coric - ALDA Governing Board Member; and Ms. Antonella Valmorbida - ALDA Secretary General, 13 municipalities were engaged at the first stage, among which 9 received the award.



Last but not least, colleagues from the ALDA Skopje Office led the ELoGE Programme also in Kosovo*, also encouraged by Mr. Elbert Krasniqi, Minister of Local Government Administration, who emphasised the importance of democratic principles in the process of local development. Overall, 6 municipalities have been awarded.

Publications

Project - activity

Subject/Title

ALDA

European Label of Governance Excellence (ELoGE) in Croatia, North Macedonia and Kosovo*

Events

Project - activity

Subject/Title

ALDA

Local training for Municipalities – ELoGE in North Macedonia

ALDA

Launching event of ELoGE in Kosovo

ALDA

Training with Municipalities – ELoGE in Kosovo

ALDA

European Label for Governance Excellence [ELoGE] - Award Ceremony.

ALDA

Implementing Good Governance: positive news from North Macedonia, Croatia and Kosovo*

CONCLUSION

One of the milestones in ALDA work consists of **supporting citizens** in their work, through a **participatory approach** and **multilateral decentralised cooperation** to **foster democracy**. Hence, this paper is meant to provide a brief overview on the whole **commitment** of ALDA in terms of implementing its **Strategy 2020-2024**, through the work done within its Hub, and the initiatives aimed at tackling more transverse issues affecting European politics and citizens' lives.

Moreover, the Association is also committed to narrow the gap between **institutions** and **local communities**, serving as a sound box of **people's aspirations and needs**, as testified by its commitment within the **Conference on the Future of Europe (CoFoE)** and the **Civil Society Convention on the CoFoE**.

Yet, the outburst of the war in Ukraine marked a radical turning point in the former definition of the **ALDA Strategy 2020-2024**, urging the Association to **further intensify its work** in the **Country** while liaising with **stakeholders** to act united and coherently for Ukrainian citizens: *"there is no peace without freedom, and no freedom without democracy... and democracy is the expression of people's will"* said Mr. Otočan in his speech addressed to members and partners.

Overall, during its 20 years of activities ALDA has developed more than **450 projects**, engaging almost **25 million citizens**, and working hand in hand with **stakeholders** and **Local Democracy Agencies**, for the creation of a vivid civic and democratic space.

The **latest reports** - see below - collected the essence of the Association and the LDAs.



ALDA ACTIVITY REPORT 2022
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LDAs ACTIVITY REPORT 2022
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